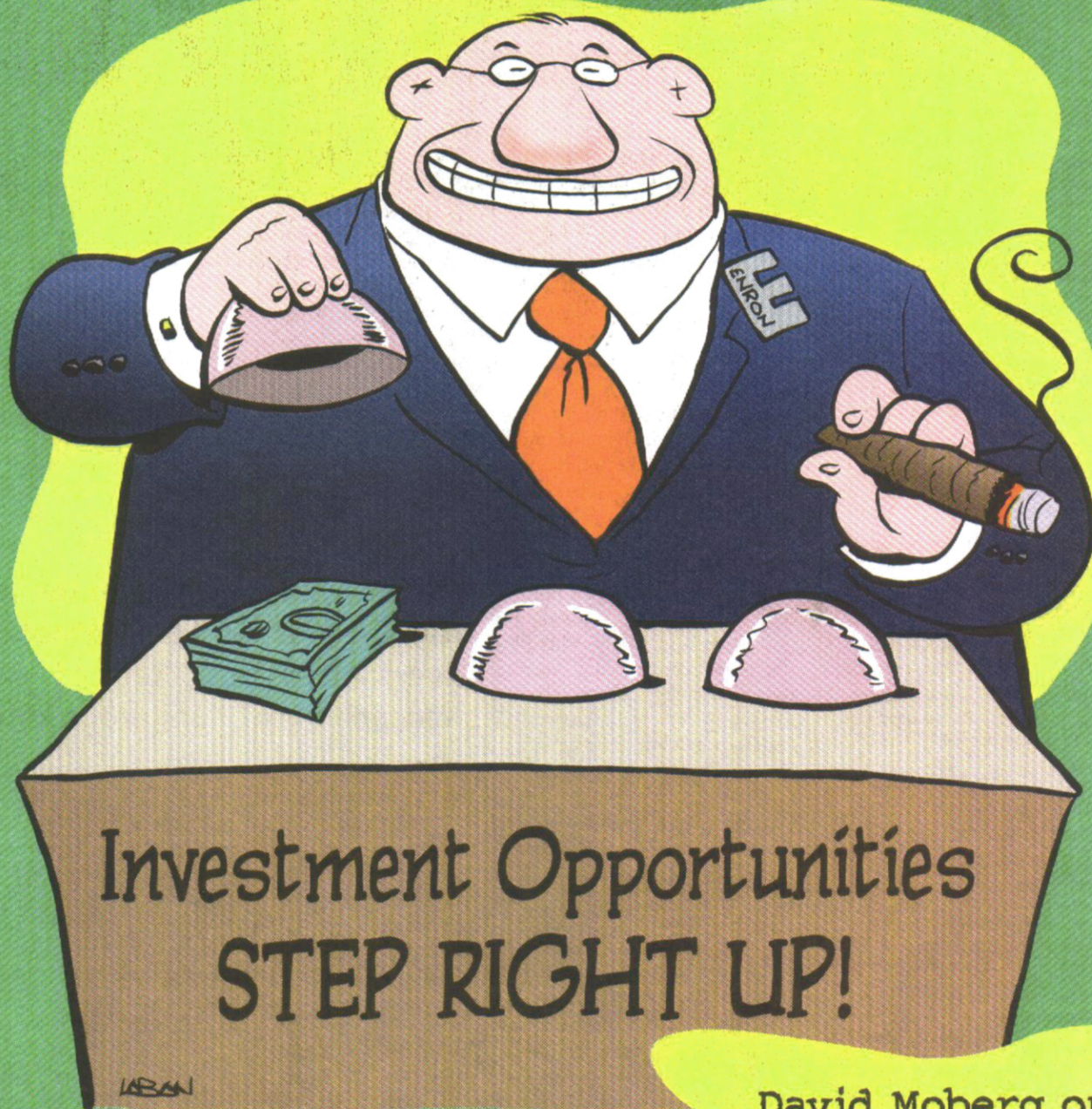


CALIFORNIA'S TEST UNREST • TONY KUSHNER, NATIVE SON

# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

March 4, 2002



David Moberg on  
Enronomics 101



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## Editorial

# The Permanent War

In his State of the Union address, George W. Bush laid out his plans for the coming year: a permanent state of war that will be financed in large part by cuts in domestic spending.

All but declaring war, Bush said that Iraq, North Korea, Iran and "their terrorist allies constitute an axis of evil." He promised "not to wait on events while danger gathers" and "not to stand by while peril draws closer and closer." Axis powers be warned: "Our war on terror ... is only begun."

In so doing Bush sided with Pentagon hawks, who since September 11 have vociferously advocated a war against Iraq. Such an extensive war will be expensive. Bush heralded his plan to implement the "the largest increase in defense spending in two decades" (putting the budget 14 percent above the Cold War average) and "develop and deploy effective missile defenses."

As far as the economy goes, he proposed that we "defeat this recession" by making "permanent" last year's tax cuts, the bulk of which benefited the rich, and by running a "deficit that will be small and short."

This appears to be a tactical maneuver on the part of the Republicans. Even with a short-term deficit, the combination of continued tax cuts and increased military spending will require reductions in government programs. Once the short term passes and balanced budgets return, the axe will really fall. Expect the Republicans to exploit wartime budgetary constraints to take out programs that have been on the Republican hit list for years.

In his speech, Bush again called for Social Security privatization. He didn't note that a personal retirement account heavily invested in a company like Enron would yield only privation. In fact, he didn't mention Enron at all. The war-time president didn't need to.

With few exceptions, members of Congress—concerned about their re-election prospects—have been reluctant to take on this popular president directly. The milquetoast response by House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt that followed the presidential address failed to point out Enron's close working relationship with the White House and the fact

that CEO Kenneth Lay—"Kenny Boy" to his friend George W.—helped pump \$4.5 million of Enron lucre into Republican Party coffers.

Bush is inoculated against criticism by his immense popularity. That popularity, like the "war on terror," shows signs of becoming self-perpetuating. No one wants to take on the man who has promised to protect Americans and the "homeland" against "tens of thousands ... of dangerous killers ... spread throughout the world like ticking time bombs, scheduled to go off without warning." For should the threat be defused, what would we be left with? A president who is the craven rent boy of transnational energy corporations and Pentagon contractors.

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Illinois) is one of the few vocal Bush critics. "The reality is that every single opportunity he's had to help working people and retired people," she told the *Chicago Tribune*, "he's chosen instead to help the wealthiest individuals and corporations."

Hers was a rare voice of dissent in a mainstream press that has been loathe to question the wisdom of administration policy. On January 23, a group of 18 foreign

**No one wants to take on the man who has promised to protect Americans against "tens of thousands ... of dangerous killers."**

affairs experts, including high-ranking former military leaders, intelligence analysts and diplomats, released an open letter to President Bush urging him "not to extend military action to Iraq." As one of the signatories, Ambassador Edward Peck, the former chief of the U.S. mission to Iraq, commented, "If we are truly interested in and concerned over the vital issues of peace and stability in the Middle East, attacking Iraq is precisely what we should not do."

Their letter, organized by the Institute for Policy Studies, was all but ignored by the U.S. mainstream media. Today, views like those of Peck, who was also the deputy director of President Reagan's task force on terrorism, are beyond the pale. America is at war.

—Joel Bleifuss

# In These Times

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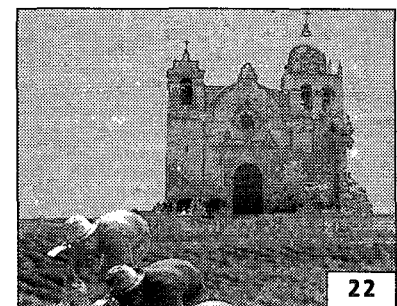
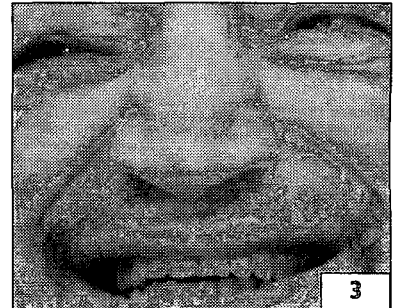
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## Culture Battles

I was surprised at Chris Lehmann's idea that the roots of today's "religious right" sprang from the religious fundamentalists of the first and second world wars, and that their current political strength and determination is the result of a foolish and unsuccessful left-wing attempt to attack their religious freedom in 1978 ("Operation Infinite Jest," January 21).

The sudden proliferation of so-called "religious schools" in the '70s was a direct result of the widespread resistance to enforced desegregation of public schools in the aftermath of the civil rights movement. These schools were in fact racist, rather than religious, institutions attempting to evade newly enacted civil rights legislation. As such, this was probably legitimately seen by civil rights activists at the time as an important battle to fight. They felt that, at the very least, these schools should not be encouraged or supported by tax benefits.

Furthermore, there is something missing in Lehmann's account of religious fundamentalism suddenly becoming a widespread political force in recent years, after being such a marginalized and maligned part of American culture during World War I. Given the history of the United States, racism rather than religion would seem to underlie such widespread and deep-rooted resistance and political engagement. A social movement whose core issues are "decency and family values," meaning conservative, entrenched attitudes about gender and race, would certainly clothe itself in the mantle of religion, but that in itself doesn't mean that such a movement is truly linked to or born out of existing fundamentalist religious movements.

It is more likely that the civil rights movement, not an IRS tax provision, provoked the initial upsurge of the "religious right." As such, I think future historians will not find it as easy as Lehmann implies to judge whether the root cause of the "decline of liberalism" was worth the cost.

**Ingrid Crickmore**  
Berkeley, California

**Chris Lehmann replies:** I fear the broad-brush rhetoric Crickmore employs only works to reinforce the argument of my piece: that unicausal, thumbs-up, thumbs-down politicization of cultural affairs works to reduce them to sloganeering and, in the bargain, to transport political questions into the murky province of cultural grievance and moral posturing.

No doubt some '70s religious schools saw their caucasian enrollments increase as a consequence of white flight and mounting

resistance to busing and desegregation plans. Other parents were doubtless moved to enroll kids in such schools because they saw a host of factors working to diminish the quality of urban education. Those factors were well-documented then, as they are now: Declining school budgets and central city tax bases, unequal allocation of state and federal educational resources to already well-appointed suburban districts, poor teacher training and unresponsive urban school bureaucracies. To assert that all this makes American religious schools of the period "racist, rather than religious institutions" strikes me as an oversimplification.

As we know from all sorts of recent events—the September 11 attacks not least among them—a politically minded eschatology can produce a toxic and horrifying theocratic absolutism. But to understand how that worldview gets politicized in the first place seems a worthwhile undertaking—particularly in a religiously plural society such as ours, which is not going to banish conservative religious communities out of the polis. Progressives have to understand, in other words, how conservative believers think and what they're striving to achieve in the public sphere. Not because this will make us agree with fundamentalists, but precisely because it will help us compete with them, and defeat them, in the political realm.

Even if progressives don't much care for our pluralistic religious civic culture, they would be well occupied, I'd argue, in the time-honored political pursuit of knowing one's enemy for strategic purposes. On the other hand, asserting for rhetorical reasons that millions of Americans are stealth Elmer Gantrys, cloak-

ing their "conservative, entrenched attitudes about gender and race" in a merely convenient theology is a formula for guaranteeing that such people can continue portraying themselves (in turn) as victims of a no less rhetorically caricatured crusade of elite liberal condescension and the phantom menace of "political correctness." For ensuring, in other words, that the long stalemate of today's culture warfare will continue to rage in its wearisome sound and fury.

## Giving Thanks

In *These Times* extends thanks and recognition to the following individuals whose anniversary support arrived after we went to press with our special commemorative issue:

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**Terry LaBan**





## Hemmed In

### Sharon targets Arafat

By Charmaine Seitz

RAMALLAH, THE WEST BANK—As Yasser Arafat sits hunkered down in his Ramallah compound, Israeli tanks surrounding his office, the Palestinian leader is hosting a stream of visitors—Palestinian artists and intellectuals, Canadian television broadcasters, Japanese journalists and whole salons of Israeli reporters.

But the guests he would most like to court, U.S. Middle East envoy Anthony Zinni, in particular, have yet to knock on his door. As the Palestinian-Israeli confrontations grow more bloody by the day, Palestinians sound almost desperate in their calls for international intercession.

“Due to the absence of other influential parties, we continue our call for U.S. intervention,” Palestinian Legislative Council member Qadoura Faris told Al Jazeera television. “But these calls have not born fruit, particularly in the absence of an effective position from the Arabs.” Egyptian and Jordanian contacts with the Palestinian leader have become almost non-existent, say despairing Arafat aides.

The most recent escalation of violence came just after Arafat had managed to create a measure of calm. The Israeli assassination of Raed Karmi of the military wing of Arafat's Fateh faction on January 14 were followed by the killing of six Israelis three days later, including guests dancing at a Jewish girl's bat mitzvah party. In reprisal, the Israeli army bombed Palestinian security offices with F-16s, destroyed the offices of the Voice of Palestine radio station, and invaded Tulkarem and Ramallah, placing tanks just meters from Arafat's door.

Meanwhile, Washington is sounding increasingly tough. President George W. Bush says that he is “very disappointed” with Arafat's efforts to curb terrorism. These comments further aggravate Arafat's predicament—how to answer international demands that he round up the very armed groups that form the base of his support among angered Palestinians.

Tensions were heightened by the interception of a boat in January loaded with 50 tons of Katushya rockets and plastic explosives. The captain of the boat was interviewed on Israeli television



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat isn't so happy anymore.

saying that the arms, bought from Iran, were headed for the Palestinian Authority. Palestinian officials initially denied any such relationship, but on January 28, the Palestinian Authority announced it had detained the man accused of planning the mission and issued arrest warrants for two others who remain abroad. Arafat still disavows his involvement.

The move is not likely to satisfy those in the Bush administration who are already clamoring to cut ties with the Palestinian Authority. But Palestinians on the street either say that they have every right to arm themselves against an Israeli army that easily outguns them, or they dismiss the Israeli charges outright. Why, they say, would Arafat go to Iran to buy arms when there are plenty to be had on the Israeli black market?

The United States still has not made up its mind about Arafat, largely due to concerns that the situation without him would be much worse. But some members of the Israeli cabinet are again calling for Arafat's removal to a third country, in demands reminiscent of a vetoed 1982 plan to extract Arafat from Beirut with a helicopter and a fishing net. “To tell the truth, I'm sorry we didn't eliminate him” then, Sharon told the Israeli newspaper Ma'ariv on January 31.

Palestinians, of course, are angered by and dismissive of such talk. Arafat's Fateh faction has warned that “harming President Arafat in any way will result in extreme perils beyond the imagination

of any Israeli.” Representatives of the 1 million Arabs inside Israel issued a statement that damage to Arafat would set the entire region ablaze.

The thing that Israel does not seem to understand, Palestinians say, is that there is no Palestinian leader more moderate than Arafat. His very political weakness now results from an unwillingness to abandon the option of peace, despite loud calls from many Palestinians to stop what has been called an “appeasement policy” and to commit to a more aggressive fight.

Despite the tanks surrounding Arafat's office, there are those who still believe the Palestinian leader will remain part of the Middle East equation after Ariel Sharon is long gone. Israeli public opinion took a significant turn in recent weeks, when some voices charged the army with “war crimes” when it demolished the homes of 500 Palestinian families, all the while claiming they were empty. Now, more than 60 Israeli servicemen and reservists have signed a petition refusing to serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. “We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people,” the petition declared.

The Israeli economy is sinking, and Sharon's military solution has brought nothing but more bloodshed, both of which could cause trouble for the Israeli coalition in coming weeks. In the meantime, Arafat's strategy is to do just enough to stay alive and with his people, and not enough to cause his political end. ■

DAVID SILVERMAN/GETTY IMAGES



## Putin TV

### Russia's last independent network goes under

By Fred Weir

MOSCOW—The Kremlin pulled the plug on Russia's last independent TV network in late January, leaving most of the population with fewer information sources than at any time since the USSR collapsed a decade ago. But the death of TV-6 came not with a Soviet-style jackboot through the door, but after a long series of pseudo-legal maneuvers designed to make state closure look like a business dispute.

TV-6, a combative, news-driven network that reached more than 50 percent of Russians, had turned a healthy profit in the past year and doubled its ratings. Yet it was driven into liquidation by a minority shareholder—the Lukoil petroleum giant—using a byzantine bankruptcy law that has since been repealed by the Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament.

Russian analysts say the story only

makes sense when you consider two things: TV-6 was 75 percent owned by renegade oligarch Boris Berezovsky, a former Kremlin insider-turned-opponent who is now in self-imposed exile in London. In addition, most of the network's staff, including news director Yevgeny Kiselyov, were journalistic refugees from NTV, Russia's third-largest broadcaster, which was seized by the state-controlled Gazprom in a similar saga last year.

The journalists' collective, led by Kiselyov, had been unsparing in its criticism of the ongoing war in Chechnya, corruption at Russia's official and corporate levels, and the increasingly authoritarian style of President Vladimir Putin. "It is obvious that wherever Kiselyov goes to work, the days of that company will be numbered," says Georgy Kuznetsov, a professor of journalism at Moscow State University. "He incurred the wrath of the Kremlin, and you can't get away with that."

The government has a minority ownership stake in Lukoil, which launched its suit to close TV-6 last summer after Kiselyov and his team had taken up residence at the network. The oil company acted on an obscure provision of the bankrupt-

cy laws that allows a minority shareholder to sue for liquidation if a company pays no dividends for two years running. Since most Russian companies—and virtually all media properties—would be bankrupted if the rule were generally applied, the Duma cancelled it last fall, effective January 1. Nevertheless, in mid-January, a Moscow court ordered TV-6 disbanded and its license put up for auction.

Press Minister Mikhail Lesin—notorious for his constant, ham-handed interference in the workings of Russia's media market—hinted that Kiselyov and his team might be permitted to remain at their jobs until the March auction, and even bid for ownership of the company, if they abandoned Berezovsky and ended their legal efforts to keep control of TV-6. When the journalists balked at that deal, bailiffs moved in at midnight January 22, switched off the network's power and sealed its doors. Its frequency was given to an all-sports network. "It looks like some kind of television coup," Kiselyov said. "The authorities have demonstrated that their single goal is to gag us."

No one has much sympathy for Berezovsky, who pioneered Russia's "Potemkin democracy," leading his fellow oligarchs in a corrupt and deceitful campaign that got former President Boris Yeltsin re-elected in 1996 but destroyed the political system's credibility. Berezovsky also claims to have orchestrated the operation that plucked Vladimir Putin from obscurity and placed him on the Kremlin throne in 1999.

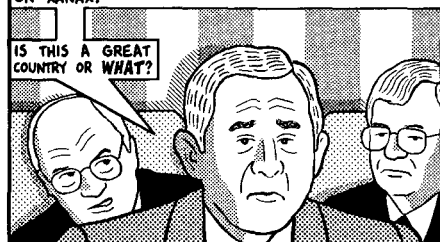
But Berezovsky subsequently fled Russia after falling out with Putin, warning, ironically, that the new president is out to suffocate democracy and install personal rule. "Berezovsky became rich due to undercover intrigues and state support, and now that same system is destroying him," says Andrei Milyukhin, director of Monitoring.Ru, a Moscow media consultancy. "Unfortunately, these methods will not lead to creation of an open, free and competitive media market in Russia."

But many Russians do feel sorry for Kiselyov and his team, who were far and away the most hard-hitting, innovative and professional journalists on Russian TV. "As long as viewers could see real news, even the state networks had to cover all the issues with some degree of honesty," says Alexei Simonov, chairman of the Foundation in Defense of Glasnost, an independent watchdog. "Now it will be all Putin TV, all the time." ■

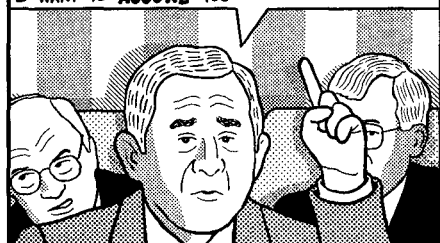
## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

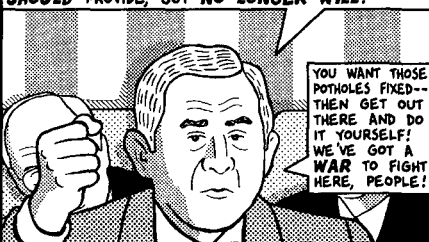
AS WE GATHER TONIGHT, OUR NATION IS AT WAR WITH TERRORISTS WE HELP FINANCE EVERY TIME WE FILL THE TANKS OF OUR GAS-GUZZLING SUV'S...OUR ECONOMY IS A SHAMBLES, THANKS IN PART TO MY OWN ABSOLUTE AND UNWAVERING ALLEGIANCE TO MY CORPORATE CONTRIBUTORS...AND YET, MY APPROVAL RATINGS ARE HIGHER THAN A PRESIDENTIAL NIECE ON XANAX!



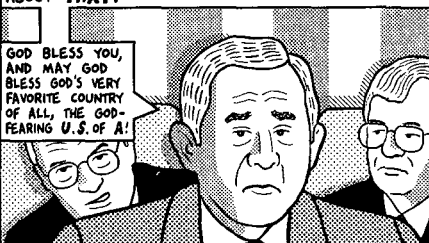
AND AS I STAND HERE TONIGHT AND EXPLOIT THE GRIEF OF THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED, WITH NAKEDLY MANIPULATIVE STORIES OF LITTLE BOYS WHOSE DADDIES HAVE GONE TO HEAVEN--AND MAKE VAGUE YET FRIGHTENING REFERENCES TO THE EVER-EXPANDING LIST OF COUNTRIES WHICH MAY SOON TREMBLE BEFORE US LIKE SORORITY SISTERS AT A DEKE PARTY-- I WANT TO ASSURE YOU--



TONIGHT, AMERICA IS EMBRACING A NEW CREED: 'LET'S ROLL'--OVER THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR DEMOCRACY, THAT IS! IN A DAMN STEAMROLLER! AND IT'S NOT GONNA BE CHEAP! THAT'S WHY I'M CALLING ON EVERY AMERICAN TO COMMIT TO 4,000 HOURS OF VOLUNTARY SERVICE--TO MAKE UP FOR THE SOCIAL SERVICES AND BASIC NECESSITIES GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE, BUT NO LONGER WILL!



--THAT I WILL DAMN SURE NOT ALLOW SOME PASTETIC GROUP OF TERRORIST-LOVING SCANDALMONGERS TO USE THE INNOCENT MISTAKES OF A BUNCH OF FELLAS I HARDLY KNOW AT SOME COMPANY CALLED 'ENDRUM,' OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, TO BRING DOWN THIS ADMINISTRATION! NOT OVER MY DEAD BODY ARE WE GONNA RELEASE ANY INFORMATION TO THE G.A.O. ABOUT THAT!





## Dumping on Nevada

The Department of Energy approves Yucca Mountain as a nuclear waste site

By Geoff Schumacher

LAS VEGAS—During the 2000 presidential race, Nevada Republican Gov. Kenny Guinn, chairman of George W. Bush's campaign in the state, faced a dilemma. Bush, with deep ties to the energy industry, was perceived as being on the wrong side of Nevada's biggest issue: the federal government's plan to store high-level nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain, 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Bush's opponent, Vice President Al Gore, had stood with President Clinton on the issue, and Clinton was Nevada's top ally in its battle with the nuclear power industry.

Guinn managed to wrestle a short written statement out of the Bush campaign declaring that "sound science," not politics, would be the basis for any decision to store 77,000 tons of spent nuclear fuel

rods in Nevada. Guinn hailed the statement as a "victory for Nevada," and Bush went on to win Nevada's four electoral votes, which he needed to beat Gore.

But Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney announced plans to revive the nation's moribund nuclear power industry shortly after taking office, and on January 10, Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham formally recommended Yucca Mountain as a "sound and suitable" place to store nuclear waste.

The recommendation comes after a General Accounting Office study, released in December, indicating that substantial scientific questions remain to be answered about the site's technical and environmental feasibility. In recent years, Yucca Mountain has been found susceptible to earthquakes, groundwater contamination and even volcanic activity. But in December, the DOE loosened rules meant to govern the site selection process, making it possible for the mountain to be approved anyway.

The recommendation was vigorously attacked by Nevada's political leaders and national environmental groups. "By rushing into an early site-selection decision," said Myrna Williams, a Clark County Commissioner, where Las Vegas is located, "the DOE has abandoned the

pretense that science will decide on Yucca Mountain."

Guinn added that he was "damn disappointed" in Abraham's decision. "I told the secretary that I think his decision stinks, the whole process stinks, and we'll see him in court."

In a measure of how high tensions have flared, Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman has vowed to have local police stop trucks transporting waste through the city and arrest the drivers and called Abraham a "piece of garbage" in response to the recommendation.

Hired by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to advocate for the waste dump, former presidential chief of staff John Sununu entered the fray in January by questioning the patriotism of Nevada leaders. Sununu argued that in the interest of "homeland security," Nevada should accept nuclear waste storage to avoid a terrorist attack on waste piling up at 103 nuclear power plants. "If Nevada is not willing to do its part in what is part of a national plan for homeland security," Sununu declared, spurring a new verbal volley from the Silver State, "maybe Americans ought to vacation somewhere else."

Goodman described Sununu as a "prostitute" for the nuclear industry,

### Extremist Threatens U.N. Agency Funding

Republican Chris Smith of New Jersey has asked President Bush to withhold \$34 million from the U.N. Population Fund (or UNFPA, its official acronym) allocated as part of a \$15.3 billion foreign operations bill approved by Congress late last year. His reason? Smith, an anti-abortionist so extreme he opposes family planning, charges that the fund supports forced sterilizations and abortions in China—simply because it provides reproductive health services there.

The UNFPA provides family planning, reproductive health and other services to the world's poorest countries; spokesmen say the agency intends to use the \$34 million for its international AIDS prevention programs. Furthermore, Peter Purdy, president of the U.S. Committee for the U.N. Population Fund, has strenuously denied the charges, calling them "scurrilous," and adds that the UNFPA requires the Chinese counties it operates in to denounce the country's one-child population policy.

Nevertheless, Bush has put the funds on hold, and is expected to issue a decision in February. "I think it's outrageous to appease extremists in Congress on the backs of the poorest, most vulnerable women and children in the world," Rep. Nita M. Lowey (D-New York) told the *Washington Post*.

### "W" is for Women

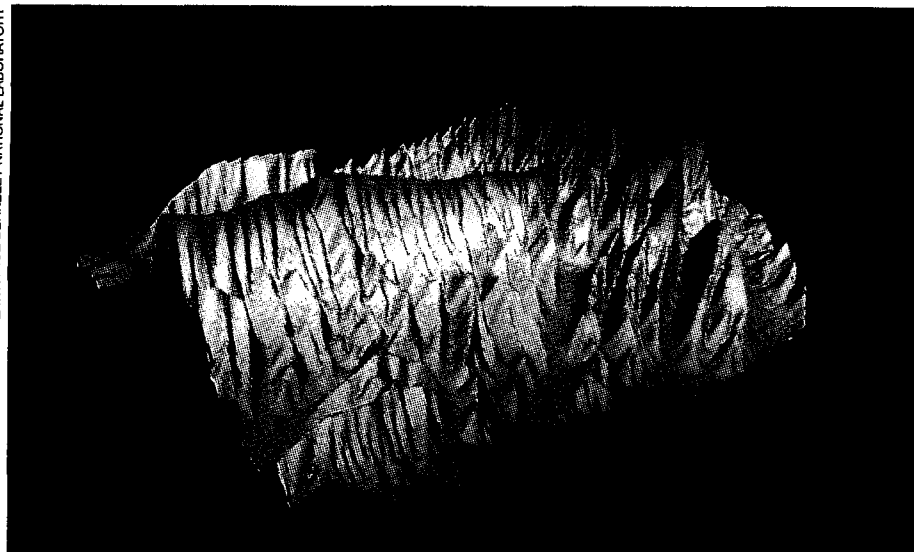
In December, a budget proposal by the Bush administration included a recommendation to close all 10 regional offices of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, an office that has been in existence since the '20s. The Women's Bureau provides programs for women that increase awareness of sexual harassment, provide training to low-income or low-skilled workers, and increase women's participation in nontraditional occupations.

An immediate outcry from women's and labor groups, however, was enough to cause the administration to reverse itself. "The idea of contemplating the closure of the regional offices is completely off the table," spokeswoman Sue Hensley told the *San Francisco Chronicle* on January 15. "The Secretary [of Labor Elaine Chao] did not want them to be cut."

Last year, the Bush administration canceled the Women's Bureau's "Equal Pay Matters" initiative and removed information about the program, which focused on achieving pay equity for women, from the Women's Bureau Web site (the Department of Labor did not return calls seeking comment about the initiative). In January 2001, Bush also eliminated the White House office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach, established by President Clinton in 1995.

—Kristie Reilly





Three-dimensional graphical representation of the Yucca Mountain topography.

while other leaders questioned the logic of Sununu's position. Nevada officials contend that nuclear waste being transported by road and rail across the country poses a greater risk of terrorist attack than storage at the reactor sites.

The energy secretary's recommendation is hardly the end of the matter. It merely sets in motion a higher-profile contest that is quickly becoming a national issue. Starting in mid-February, President Bush will ponder Abraham's recommendation and approve or reject the site. If he approves it, the matter then

goes to Guinn, who has 60 days to accept or veto it. If he vetoes as expected, Congress will have 90 days to override him. The House and Senate each must obtain a simple majority vote to move forward. The GOP-controlled House is likely to approve it easily, but the Senate vote could be much closer. Nevada Sen. Harry Reid is the majority whip, giving him substantial power to sway votes. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle has supported Reid's anti-Yucca stance.

If Congress overrides the state's veto, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will

spend three years reviewing the Department of Energy's scientific evidence. If the commission licenses the site, construction will begin. Conceivably, Yucca Mountain could be ready to accept nuclear waste shipments sometime after 2010.

That's a slow process in itself, but Nevada officials are developing legal strategies they hope could delay the process even longer. Nevada has hired a Washington law firm, Egan and Associates, to help fight the dump. Lawsuits have already been filed and more are in the works challenging the project on technical and procedural grounds. Las Vegas has vowed to file lawsuits of its own. "There is time for Nevada to make its case and stop the dump," Attorney General Frankie Sue Del Papa says. "We're committed for the long haul."

Meantime, the state is preparing a \$5 million public relations blitz aimed at alerting the rest of the nation to the nuclear waste issue. The campaign, targeting key states, is slated to begin this spring. Proposed transportation routes would bring the waste destined for Nevada through at least 43 states, and an estimated 52 million people live within half a mile of the proposed highway and rail routes. If there is an accident, state officials say, it could endanger millions. "For years this has been a Nevada problem," Goodman says. "Today it is the country's problem." ■

## APPALL-O-METER

### What's the Dif? 8.9

It's about the biggest screw-up you can commit in the commemorative doodad business. A Texas-based company called Merit Industries was entrusted with fashioning a plaque to be unveiled in January at Lauderdale, Florida's celebration of Martin Luther King Day. Among other African-American notables, the memorial was meant to praise the actor James Earl Jones. Instead, the *Washington Post* reports, the plaque read "Thank you James Earl Ray for keeping the dream alive."

Naturally, city officials were outraged that their plaque was so generous to the memory of King's assassin. Merit boss Herbert Miller offered soothing words by way of explaining the error: "We have a lot of people who don't speak English. Accidentally, one of the girls who

doesn't know James Earl Jones from a man on the moon accidentally typed James Earl Ray."

### Evil-Doers 2.3

A 24-year old New Zealander ill-advisedly chose to attend a masquerade party dressed up as Osama bin Laden. At first it was good for a few chuckles, and it looked as if he might pull the joke off with no hard feelings. But as other revelers got more lubricated, the mood changed. Suddenly the young man found himself on the ground with 20 people "playing soccer with [his] head."

The police intervened, and the lad was taken to a hospital to get stitched

up. He won't press charges, according to the *New Zealand Truth*, but he does feel a bit aggrieved. "What I don't understand is there were at least two guys at the party dressed up as the devil," he complained. "Surely the devil is more evil than Osama will ever be?"

—Dave Mulcahey





## Prison Blues

Starbucks, Nike, others  
profit from inmate labor

By Erica Barnett

SEATTLE—Most people assume convicted felons spend their days stamping license plates, making furniture for state offices, and digging ditches along the highway for 25 or 30 cents an hour. So it may seem a bit odd that Steven Strauss, until last August an inmate at the Twin Rivers Corrections Unit in Monroe, Washington, spent his last Christmas holiday working for Starbucks, packaging the brightly colored bags of coffee and chocolate-covered espresso beans that would end up under Christmas trees across the country.

Twin Rivers, part of a four-unit prison that houses mentally ill inmates, high-security felons and participants in the state's sex offender treatment program, is also home to a packaging facility run by Monroe-based Signature Packaging Solutions. Signature is one of 15 Washington State companies that operate within the prison system and use inmate labor to supplement their outside work force. "The majority of the workers are hired for big jobs, which come around holiday times," says Strauss, who was jailed on drug and firearm charges in 1997. "We used to [package] all Starbucks' coffee for the holidays."

In a statement, Starbucks public affairs director Audrey Lincoff said Starbucks believes its contract with Signature is "entirely consistent with our mission statement," which says the Seattle company will respect others, contribute to the community and embrace diversity.

Partnerships between prison systems and private businesses may be unconventional, but they're hardly new. Companies in Washington have benefited from a captive labor force since 1983, when a commercial clothing assembly line was launched at the Washington Corrections Center for Women. Since then, the program has expanded to become the largest private-sector prison employment program in the country. Similar programs have been set up in prison systems from Ohio to Oregon.

Proponents of the program, like its administrator, Cathy Carlson, say it rehabilitates prisoners and gives them valuable on-the-job training. "The mission is to give offenders, if nothing else, a work ethic and experience mirroring some real-world experience," Carlson says. Inmates say the program does little to prepare them for employment outside prison walls, however. Yuri Holmes, another Monroe prisoner, says that, in fact, only prisoners with lengthy sentences are allowed into the program. "Three-quarters of the total work force for this so-called rehabilitation program are people who are serving life in prison," he says.

Others allege that the DOC's motives are more pecuniary than pure-hearted. Although Signature is required to pay inmates the state minimum wage of \$6.90 an hour—a sizeable increase over the state prison standard of 35 cents to \$1.10—prisoners rarely see more than half that amount. That's because the department shaves as much as 50 per-

cent off the top of a prisoner's paycheck, to fund "room and board," savings, crime victims compensation and other financial obligations the state would ordinarily have to pay itself. "There's a benefit to the inmate, there's a benefit to the state, and there's a benefit to you and me as taxpayers," summarizes Doug Edlund, co-owner of Signature.

The program has attracted little attention in the state. In the first lawsuit of its kind, Bellevue-based attorney Richard Stephens is suing the DOC on grounds the agency violated the state constitution, which specifically prohibits selling prisoner labor to private companies (even though a 1979 federal law encourages it). The lawsuit charges, in addition, that the agency allowed a company called MicroJet to undercut its competitors by paying prison workers minimum wage, offering no benefits for jobs that pay between \$14 and \$20 an hour in the free world. His case heads to the state Supreme Court on January 31.

0000 PSP  
http://www.wa.gov/doc/Content/Industries/psp.htm

# Correctional Industries

## Washington State Department of Corrections Private Sector Partnerships

### WHY PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS?

- You need dependable workers, low overhead, and first class industrial space.
- Thousands of people incarcerated in Washington correctional facilities need jobs.
- The Department of Corrections has industrial space at major institutions.

You are in business to sell high quality products and services at a profit.

By employing highly motivated workers and lowering your overhead rate by operating within an institution, you make money. If you don't have your own manufacturing plant, or are unhappy with an out-of-state or offshore supplier you can lower your procurement costs and get better service by contracting with Correctional Industries.

At the same time, by working for private employers and earning wages comparable to those in the community, offenders have the opportunity to build skills, earn money for rehabilitation, contribute to the costs of their incarceration, and gain the valuable experience they will need to make it on the outside.

### The Benefits

- A Motivated, Readily Available Workforce
- Pride in Workmanship
- Industrial Space Provided
- Potential Gid Performance on State Contracts
- Workers Health Care Provided
- Educational and Vocational Training

Actual text from the Washington State Department of Corrections Web site.

Paul Wright, a prisoner at Monroe and the editor of *Prison Legal News*, says many prisoners actually like the program because it offers an appealing alternative to low-paid prison jobs. "You could make \$55 a month doing janitorial work, or you could make \$150 a month working for an outside business," Wright says. The problem is, private businesses are "paying prison workers less than they're paying on the outside, but they aren't reducing the markup to the consumer"—they're pocketing the profits.

Another key difference, Wright notes, is that prisoners can just be sent back to their cells whenever business goes through a lull. "On the outside, they have to lay off workers," he says. "It's much more difficult."

Carlson and Edlund deny this, noting that Signature has a contract for a minimum of 80 prison workers at a time. Carlson acknowledges, however, that "during the holiday season, there's even more employment."

Stephens believes the system is a PR nightmare in the making. "A majority of people don't even realize that these products are being manufactured by prisoners," he says. "They need to know that they are buying these products from a company that is basically getting rich off prisoners." Wright believes if people knew they were buying from companies that profit off prison labor, they'd take their money elsewhere. "These companies spend a lot of money on their public image," Wright says, "but then they're quick to make money any way they can." ■

## Against the Odds

### Public housing residents eke out some rare victories

By Chris Chandler

Chicago—The hearing in 1993 was jam-packed with more than 400 residents as the chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority proudly announced a new \$50 million federal grant to rebuild the Cabrini-Green public housing project on Chicago's North Side.

On hand were various local and national dignitaries, including U.S. Reps. Cardiss Collins and Bobby Rush, expecting to receive credit for helping bring federal dollars to one of Chicago's poorest communities. Instead they heard an angry rejection of the redevelopment plan by every speaker.

CHA chairman Vincent Lane described the basic elements of the plan: Demolish six high rises and reserve 300 of the new units for Cabrini-Green residents. Just 300 units in a plan that claimed to be revitalizing an existing community? Why hadn't the residents been allowed to have anything to do with developing the plan? The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported that "the residents unanimously said no."

The uprising took everyone on stage by surprise. But it shouldn't have. The Cabrini-Green Local Advisory Council (LAC), made up of elected representatives from each building, had gone over the plan in detail the week before and voted unani-

mously to reject it. They saw it as a land grab by wealthy developers interested in moving into Chicago's rapidly gentrifying nearby neighborhoods. "When they discover oil on the reservation, they move the Indians," is the way Cora Moore, a Cabrini-Green building president, described it at the time.

That public meeting strengthened the tenants' sense of community and their resolve to fight for a plan that would include benefits for residents. Now, eight years later, after a successful federal lawsuit and scores of demonstrations, the tenants have succeeded in gaining many of their objectives. There will be 700 new public housing units, not 300, and another 460 set aside for moderate-income families, with residents hoping to qualify for many of those too. Those 1,160 units will be scattered throughout the new development.

The LAC will be co-developers in the project, with the fees they earn at their disposal for nonprofit purposes, be it building more housing for residents or improving services such as job training and placement. The court-ordered consent decrees with the city and the CHA also assure residents of jobs and training on the redevelopment work.

It's a success story that is rare in public housing, which for the past 10 years has been undergoing a drastic, yet almost unremarked transformation. A federal program to transform public housing called Hope VI has funded more than 165 revitalization projects around the country since 1993, creating new and often successful mixed-income neighborhoods while demolishing thousands of units of public housing.

Public housing residents, however, don't seem to be the ones benefiting. In most cities and at most developments, tenants are being given Section 8 vouchers to find housing on the private market. A number of studies have shown that the apartments most residents move to are heavily concentrated in the poorest, often most segregated neighborhoods. Worse, the units are being torn down without being replaced. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development figures report that of 82,000 public housing units destroyed between 1993 and 1999, only 51,000 were rebuilt, with many of those in all likelihood not even going to public housing, given the new mixed-income plans.

A partial list of companies that have worked within the prison system, directly employed prison workers, or contracted with companies that employ prison workers, either currently or in the past:

Allstate  
Best Western  
Dell Computer  
Eddie Bauer  
Hawaiian Tropical  
Products  
J.C. Penney  
Kmart  
Kwalu Inc.  
Konica  
Lockhart Technologies  
McDonald's

Merrill Lynch  
Microjet  
Microsoft  
New York, New York  
Hotel and Casino  
Nike  
No Fear Inc.  
Omega Pacific  
Parke-Davis  
Planet Hollywood  
Prison Blues (jeans)  
Shearson Lehman

Starbucks  
Target  
TWA  
Victoria's Secret  
Union Bay  
Upjohn  
Washington Marketing  
Group

Sources: *Covert Action Quarterly*, *Prison Legal News*, and *The Gadfly of Athens*





The Cabrini-Green housing projects in the '70s.

All in all, it's turned out to be "only a slightly gentler form of urban renewal," says Richard Wheelock, an attorney with the Legal Assistance Foundation who represents tenants from Cabrini-Green.

In Chicago, only Cabrini-Green and the Henry Horner Homes have been able to gain any substantial gains for their residents. "Only in the places where the tenants' had legal representation and butted heads against the CHA did they receive any reasonable benefits," says Larry Bennett, a professor of political science at DePaul University who is editing a book on the city's public housing crisis. In most cases, such as with the huge Robert Taylor Homes project on the South Side, residents are being given just a few token replacement units.

At every CHA board meeting since June, a delegation from Chicago's Coalition to Protect Public Housing has urged the board to stop demolition until more housing is available. Standing in an arch around the CHA commissioners at one recent meeting, the coalition, made up mostly of clergymen, said prayers and sang hymns to persuade the board to slow

down. "We have 80,000 homeless and you're tearing down homes," said John Donahue, head of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. The phrase became a chant by coalition members. He demanded an immediate stop to demolition and an emergency meeting between the coalition and CHA city officials.

Donahue says it's only going to get worse: The CHA was awarded another \$427 million in grants and loans in October by Hope VI to continue demolition and redevelopment. Yet CHA plans call for demolishing 4,317 apartments this year, while building only 95, according to Donahue.

Residents at Cabrini-Green and Henry Horner have legal assurances that they will be able to stay in their communities, thanks to the consent decree. Horner has been able to negotiate the best deal for housing—63 percent of the total new and rehabilitated units on-site and in the neighborhood will be reserved for Horner residents. The final complex will have 848 public housing units, 132 "affordable" units, and 361 market-rate units. Horner will thus be the only development in the

country to have more public housing than market-rate apartments.

As co-developer for the huge, 18-acre redevelopment plan adjacent to Chicago's downtown Loop, the Cabrini-Green LAC has been able to negotiate an even more precedent-setting deal. Of all new units built, 30 percent will be for current Cabrini residents, 20 percent will be for "affordable" housing, and 50 percent will be market rate. "The most significant part of the agreement is that residents will be co-developers," says attorney Wheelock. "People will look to what happens here as an important precedent."

Moore sees the development proposal as a final confirmation of what tenants have struggled for for decades. A divorced mother of five when her West Side home burnt to the ground, Moore emerged as a tenant leader in 1989 with a takeover of her building's lobby from teen-age gang members. The following year, tenants were managing the building and hiring fellow tenants as armed security guards. "Our ship is finally sailing into port," she says. "It's been such a long struggle to get some concrete results." ■

# A Double Standard on Terrorism

By Saul Landau

**P**resident Bush repeatedly warns other nations of the consequences of harboring terrorists, yet he seems to have forgotten the long list of men—living freely in his brother Jeb's home state—who have terrorized and swear they will continue to terrorize Cuba.

This story begins in 1990, when, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba's economy nose-dived. By 1991, lacking jobs and sufficient food, thousands of Cubans propelled themselves toward Florida on inner tubes. In response to this wave of rafters, some of whom died at sea, emerged Brothers to the Rescue, ostensibly a corps of volunteer pilots to spot rafters in the dangerous waters separating Cuba and the Florida Keys and radio their positions to nearby ships.

However, by 1995, after Washington and Havana had agreed to implement a legal migration process, the wave of rafters subsided. Brothers to the Rescue changed their mission from an allegedly humanitarian one to outright provocation.

Brothers to the Rescue was founded by Jose Basulto, a man whom the CIA had trained for the Bay of Pigs Invasion. In August 1962, a year and a half after that fiasco, Basulto went on a CIA-authorized raid into Cuba during which he shot at a hotel, fired into a theater, and blasted a Havana residential section. Twenty people died.

More than 30 years later, in June 1995, Basulto filed a false flight plan, claiming a mission to the Bahamas, and instead flew his plane from Florida to Cuba, dropping anti-Castro leaflets over Cuban territory. On July 13, he returned to drop religious medals, dipping his small plane over the rooftops of populated areas.

These flights coincided with a terrorist campaign by other militant anti-Castro exiles to cripple Cuba's tourist economy. Luis Posada Carriles, an exile linked to dozens of bombings and assassination attempts in the past 40 years, told a *New York Times* reporter that the prestigious Cuban American National Foundation financed a scheme to bomb tourist sites in Havana. Posada Carriles' agents planted more than a dozen bombs, killing one Italian tourist,

wounding several people and doing extensive property damage.

However, the FBI showed little enthusiasm in responding to Cuba's request to investigate the Florida-based exiles' role in the tourist bombings. In January 1996, one National Security Council official even wrote a letter on White House sta-



tionary to the FAA, requesting that the Brothers' pilots licenses be suspended for having filed false flight plans. But the FAA, like the FBI, did nothing.

After getting little satisfaction from its formal demands that the State Department stop the flights, Cuba covertly sent spies to Florida. Posing as Castro-haters, the spies penetrated some of the violent anti-Castro groups. Cuba's intelligence chiefs directed some of the spies who were pilots to infiltrate Brothers to the Rescue.

On February 24, 1996, after receiving warnings from the U.S. government not to fly over Cuba, and direct orders from Cuban air traffic control not to enter its territory, a trio of aircraft with Basulto flying in the lead entered Cuban airspace. Cuban MIGs shot down two of the three encroaching planes; only Basulto's escaped the missiles. (A debate continues as to whether the actual shootdowns occurred over Cuban or international airspace.)

The FBI had discovered the spy network in 1996 and monitored their communications until arresting them in 1999. At their trial, U.S. prosecutors charged the spies with complicity in murder of the pilots, downplaying the fact that a U.S. official had indirectly informed the Cuban government of the Brothers' flight plan. And Basulto testi-

fied that he had changed the violent approach of his youth to that of Ghandi and Martin Luther King, except in the case of Cuba where, he maintained, violence was still necessary. A federal judge then handed down sentences ranging from life imprisonment to 15 years.

Yet what would the U.S. Air Force have done—or what would they do now—if unauthorized planes entered our airspace?

In the case of the Brothers, the Cuban government showed patience, giving repeated warnings to the State Department. This soft approach by Cuba was unusual in light of the terrorist air tragedy that anti-Castro exiles had inflicted on a Cuban commercial airliner. In October 1976, Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch, another terrorist with strong links to U.S. intelligence agencies, blew up a Cubana Airlines passenger jet carrying 73 people. Both were protected by the U.S. government. And in 1991, George Bush I, over the objections of the FBI and INS, granted Bosch asylum in the United States.

In a recent speech, Fidel Castro raised this apparent contradiction in U.S. anti-terrorist policy. "We have the right to ask," Castro said, "what will be done about Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch, the perpetrators of that monstrous terrorist act ... and about those

**What would the U.S. Air Force have done if unauthorized planes entered our airspace?**

who planned and financed the bombs that were placed in the hotels in [Havana], and the assassination attempts against Cuban leaders, which haven't stopped for a minute in more than 40 years?"

In short, the Bush administration continues to harbor some terrorists, as if this policy in no way contradicted its profession that terrorism is the world's worst sin. ■

*Saul Landau is director of digital media and international outreach at Cal Poly Pomona University. His latest film is Maquila: A Tale of Two Mexicos.*



# Test Unrest

*California teachers are leading a backlash against high-stakes exams*

*By David Bacon*

*Oakland, California*

*Remember spring fever? The slow time at school, when sleepy students looked out the window after lunch, waiting for the bell?*

Spring has become a more serious season these days. As warm weather arrives in California classrooms, schools have gone test-crazy as students prepare for the state-mandated STAR (Standardized Testing and Reporting) exam. Teachers begin "teaching the test," as they call it, although many do so with great trepidation.

When the results finally come in, every school in California gets rated and ranked. Then the state begins handing out cash awards to teachers and school personnel based on the test scores. In October, California gave financial bonuses to teachers at 304 schools. Some received \$5,000 apiece, a smaller number \$10,000, and an even more select group \$25,000 each. But instead of being overjoyed by the largess, many educators felt as if they were being bribed.

Reva Kidd decided to use her award for a purpose not intended by the state. The English-immersion teacher at Berkeley's Cragmont School donated some of her \$10,000 to a fund that is redistributing awards among all Berkeley teachers and some for a field trip for one of her colleague's classes. But she directed the rest of her money to Cal CARE, an advocacy group that organizes parents and faculty against high-stakes testing. "It's dirty money," Kidd charges. "We've had to fight hard for adequate salaries, but this money is a bribe to make us complacent in the face of changes that are hurting students and teachers alike."

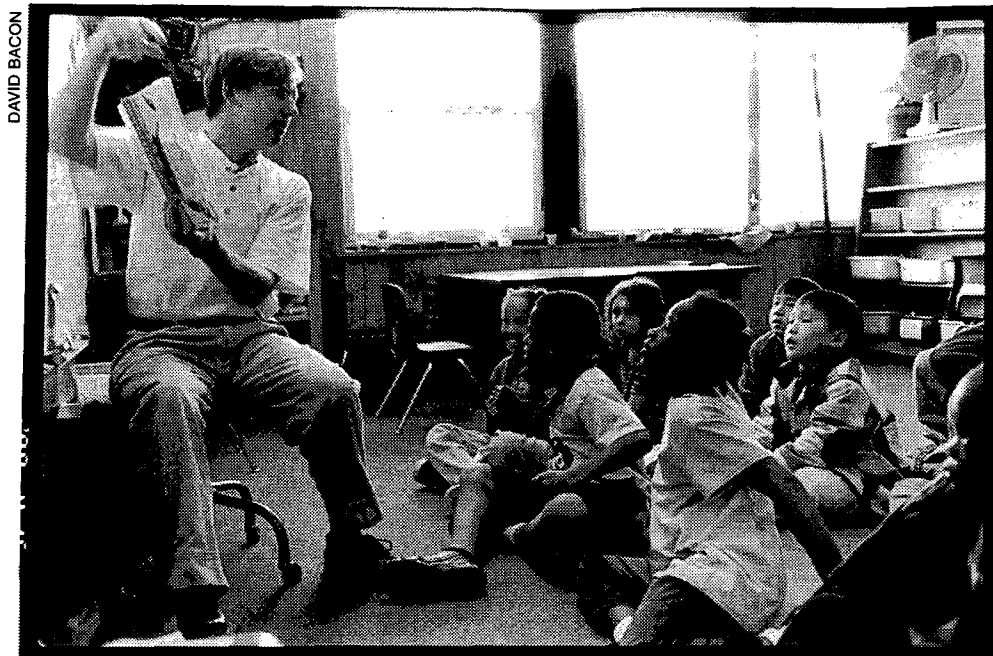
The testing juggernaut has swept aside concerns over developing curricula that value a diversity of cultures and encourage critical thinking among students. Yet behind the conservative rhetoric of "high expectations" and "accountability" is the fact that schools in poor communities simply do not provide an education equal to those in affluent neighborhoods. Now President Bush has made standardized testing the centerpiece of his new education bill, which mandates

nationwide exams for grades three through eight. Instead of channeling the enormous resources those schools would need to make up for social inequality, Washington has linked federal education funding with improved test scores, further punishing those schools that underachieve.

Kidd isn't alone, and her doubts are commonly heard from parents and educators nationwide. Students at schools in New York and Massachusetts refused to take mandated standardized tests, risking their academic futures. Backlash from Wisconsin parents forced the state legislature to kill a proposed high-school graduation exam. In Cleveland, the NAACP filed a lawsuit charging that the Ohio Proficiency Test is racially biased, one of many such legal challenges. But the actions in the Bay Area mark the first time teachers themselves have taken such an active role in challenging the exams.

These educators argue that the tests are biased against the poor and minorities and transform education into a kind of testing Olympics. "High-stakes tests force us to teach in a way in which high scores become the most important goal," explains Terry Fletcher, a third-grade teacher from Thousand Oaks Elementary School. "Teachers are forced to cram information into students, but not to encourage critical thinking or broader knowledge. There's no emphasis on art or music or even social studies. Testing really turns us into worse teachers."

In California, the individual Certificated Staff Performance awards (like Kidd's) are supplemented by the Academic Performance Index awards, which were sent to 4,800 schools across the state that made the largest increases in STAR scores. The API awards—which totaled \$350 million statewide—are divided among all school personnel, from the principal to the janitors. In announcing the awards pro-



"Teaching is a combination of a science and an art," says Berkeley teacher Barry Fyke.

grams, Gov. Gray Davis implied that the most deserving schools would be those in the poorest communities. The theory went that teachers there, presumably motivated by cash prizes, would inspire pupils to make big jumps in test scores.

Instead the money has gone to places such as San Francisco's Lowell High School—the city's premier elite campus—where students are selected based on their previous high academic achievement. Yet the teachers at Lowell, who each received \$591 under the API program, were some of the first to voice opposition to the awards. Lowell teachers decided to encourage voluntary donations to a scholarship fund for students at schools that didn't receive the award. Ken Tray, the school's union representative, says teachers supported the idea because the awards "seem like a backdoor merit-pay system." Even Lowell's principal contributed his award to the fund. "Don't get me wrong—we've got great faculty here at Lowell, and as teachers we certainly deserve more money," Tray adds. "But our friends and colleagues at Balboa High, for instance, also work their tails off. The awards are a slap in the face for them, not recognizing the hard work they do."

In Berkeley, teachers went even further. The Berkeley Federation of Teachers won an agreement from the district that teachers would be allowed to indicate on a payroll form their preference for using their money as Reva Kidd did—redistribution to all teachers, a field trip fund, or donating it to Cal CARE. Berkeley teachers have turned in about \$20,000 so far. The union then drew up a petition opposing the use of standardized tests entirely. Nearly half of Berkeley's 600 K-12 teachers signed on. Among other objections, the petition declared that the test "is racially, culturally and socio-economically biased, unfair, and inappropriate for our students."

"I think some appreciate the money in a profession in which we aren't paid as professionals," says union leader Barry Fyke. "But a majority of teachers don't think testing and prizes are a very effective way to ensure accountability. Teaching is a combination of a science and an art, and should be evaluated in the

classroom, rather than using money as a bribe to get kids to perform well on tests."

What's driving the relentless push for standardized testing? There are numerous factors, ranging from political ambition to genuine frustration of parents and teachers with the failures of the public school system to educate its students. Also backing the growth in testing is the so-called standards and accountability movement. This is not a grass-roots effort, but the work of organizations like the Pew Charitable Trust, the Heritage Foundation, the Hudson Institute and corporate CEOs such as IBM's Lou Gerstner. "Big corporations like IBM, Proctor and Gamble and Eastman

Kodak are very up-front about their agenda," says Mary O'Brien, an Ohio parent who led protests against standardized testing in her state. "They want schools to educate students to their specifications. They want education centered on testing, and curriculum aligned to the tests."

But testing gets a big boost from another important and often overlooked source: the testing companies themselves. School districts and state governments are spending huge sums on testing and standards. Test publishers divide a testing market that was estimated at \$218.7 million in 1999 by the Association of American Publishers. Dominating the field are three big publishers: McGraw-Hill, Harcourt and Houghton-Mifflin. Rising profits for these companies are practically guaranteed under Bush's education bill, which makes use of their products mandatory.

Test contracts are lucrative. California, for example, granted Harcourt a 5-year, \$60 million contract to administer and score the STAR tests in 1997. In doing so, then Gov. Pete Wilson cut short a process in which state educators had spent years developing a set of core curriculum standards. The so-called CLAS test, designed to assess knowledge of that curriculum, was attacked for efforts to incorporate cultural diversity and dumped. To force the legislature to immediately adopt an off-the-shelf test, Wilson withheld \$200 million in school funding until lawmakers agreed.

Twenty states already work with publishers to come up with standards for what students are expected to know. "It's a wise state that seeks the advice of a publisher when formulating standards, to ensure they're rigorous and not too vague," explains Maureen DiMarco, the former California secretary of education under Wilson, who's now vice president for education and government at Houghton-Mifflin.

The company that helps develop the standards has a better chance at getting the bid for the test—and an advantage in selling more textbooks. Beginning in 1985, for instance, Harcourt developed the now famous Texas Academic Assessment Skills



(TAAS) test. Texas currently contracts for test development with National Computer Systems (NCS) for \$20 million a year. NCS in turn subcontracts to Harcourt, which gets another \$2.8 million a year for developing TAAS study guides. Harcourt's textbooks were marketed to local districts around the state with a flier stating: "Why choose Harcourt Brace for your math program? ... [It is the] only program to have texts written by the same company that helps to write the TAAS tests." Harcourt later discontinued the promotion. But according to the Texas Education Agency, the company sold \$25 million worth of elementary school math textbooks to the state in 1999.

Test-scoring is also a growing source of revenue. NCS scores Ohio's tests for about \$10 million a year. But Ohio parents got a surprise in 1998, when they discovered that ninth- and 12th-grade students had their essays graded by a subcontractor, Measurement Inc. For \$1.4 million a year, the company employed temporary workers at close to minimum wage in a North Carolina strip mall. These workers, who had no teaching experience or education credentials, spent about two minutes looking over each paper.

Back in California, Harcourt was penalized \$1.1 million in August 1999 for late reporting of test results and 100,000 mistaken reports, which had to be recalled after being sent to parents. Last fall, Harcourt again botched scoring of the STAR exam in eight districts. By using norms from the wrong period, student scores were artificially elevated.

Technical errors aren't the only problems with the tests. In Cleveland, the NAACP charged the Ohio Proficiency Test with being racially biased after no student in five schools in poor urban areas passed all sections. Two Harcourt tests were recently charged with being discriminatory to African-American students, when they were used as a basis for admission to a New Orleans high school. For the 1997-1998 school year, 763 students took the tests, of whom 44 percent were black and 42 percent were white. Of the 347 who passed, 27 percent were black and 59 percent were white. The school district was sued—an increasingly common experience for districts and states using standardized tests. DiMarco says, "It's hard to have a test that doesn't get sued."

But it's the state or school district that has to mount a defense and bear the legal costs, not the publisher. Yet DiMarco admits that the tests do measure social and economic conditions. "Children from poor communities go to schools which don't have resources and use less effective methods of instruction," she says. "The implications of what's being measured are very deep. Poor kids can learn just as well as higher-income kids. They're just not getting the resources they need."

But California teachers say greater resources should be going to the schools themselves, not the testing companies. "We need more than just a gimmick," says Fyke, the Berkeley teachers union president. "What people want is accountability from both teachers and students, and that's good. But what we have is a method designed by people far from the classroom."

Cautious in the way he frames the reasons for opposition, Fyke also proposes an alternative. "We have to identify what the expectations really are," he says. "These should be developed by teachers, parents and researchers. We need to assess more difficult things—the ability of students to solve math problems and write creatively, their knowledge of social studies, their highest thinking skills, their ability to take initiative and accept responsibility, and their emotional intelligence. We expect teachers to be able to impart all these things, and so we should. But I would welcome a process of assessment which actually measured this."

Many students are even more direct. "We know what needs to be done to make our school better, and the test doesn't help at all," says Fadeelah Muhyee, a 12th grader at Oakland High School. "We don't have enough books. There are no counselors. There's a lot of unevenness among teachers, and there's no ethnic studies. Now they just want teachers to teach to the test. We don't need a test to show us that we're at the bottom—we already know that."

These sentiments could lead to a boycott of the test this spring—as has happened in other parts of the country. If that happens, Berkeley and Oakland will be a likely point of origin. Naomi Katz, whose child goes to Oakland's Crocker Highlands Elementary School, works part-time for Cal CARE and hopes to organize a mass opt-out in Oakland in the spring. "The test just highlights the inequity of resources," she charges. "It absorbs huge amounts of money we need to fix deteriorating schools, to hire and train fully credentialed teachers, and for developing a meaningful curriculum."

*"We don't need a test to show us that we're at the bottom—we already know that."*

Maureen Katz (no relation), mother of a third-grader at Berkeley's Rosa Parks Elementary, says the only reservation she has about that prospect is the fact that Rosa Parks teachers donated their prize money this year to the school itself. The school, rebuilt as a result of parent pressure, is the only elementary school in Berkeley west of San Pablo Avenue, in one of the city's poorest communities. "As parents, it's hard to say we don't want that money," she says. "But if that were out of the equation, I'd like to see parents organize a boycott."

Turning in the award money is just one indication that many teachers are likely to support such a move. They are already notifying parents in a number of East Bay classrooms that they can fill in forms which allow their children to opt out of the test. Gail Mendez, a teacher at Bayview Elementary School in Richmond, says that despite some of the lowest teacher salaries in the state, she couldn't in good conscience accept her \$591. "I tell my fourth graders that you have to stand up for what you believe in," she says. "How could I face them if I took this money?" ■

# Business as Usual in the Disinformation Economy

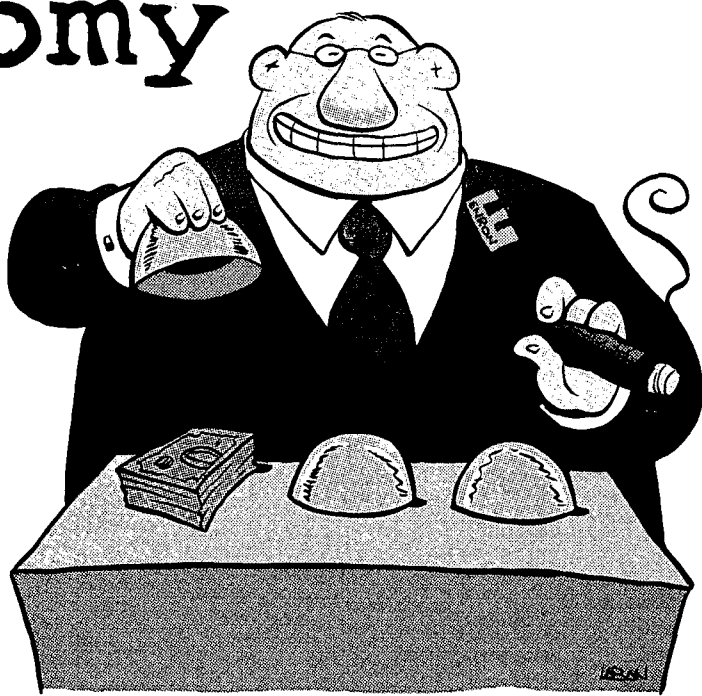
By David Moberg

**E**ven more than the dot-coms, Enron—the aptly nicknamed “crooked E”—was the star of the new “information economy.” During the past decade, economic fortune-tellers said that the future of business lay in exploiting the Internet and information technologies to create boundless productivity growth and profits. At the same time, there was a continued ideological push toward deregulation of all markets, and financial firms increased their domination over producers of goods and services. Tapping into and deceptively feeding the decade’s collective delusion of unlimited wealth through computerized financial wheeling and dealing, Enron soared in a few years from a sleepy utility to the seventh-largest company in the United States—and one of the most widely praised.

The sordid, still unfolding tale of Enron’s crash is a story with several themes: common greed that soared to uncommon dimensions; the failure and foiling of government regulation; duplicitous accountants, lawyers, bankers, executives and politicians on the corporate take. But it also makes a compelling argument that the new information economy should really be called the *disinformation* economy.

In the disinformation economy, there is a systematic effort to hide, distort and lie as a way of gaining wealth and power. In itself, this is old stuff, but the techniques for such deception are more sophisticated and elaborate than ever. Even though insider dealing is a crucial part of the disinformation economy, on the surface the economy relies heavily on public information, certainly much more than in the era of handshake deals between private capitalist titans. In this time of deregulation and globalization, as markets grow more all-encompassing and less constrained, failures of information can have much more dire effects. Even on capitalist terms, markets require full, accurate and universally available information to guide rational decisions by investors, consumers and citizens. Disinformation raises the level and cost of irrationality even as it promises a free market utopia.

**E**nron’s stock market success was based on systematic exaggeration of its financial strength. Its explosive growth and sudden collapse both were linked to the creation of more than 3,500 subsidiaries that were often used to keep debt off Enron’s balance sheets, which in turn helped prop up its credit rating and reduce the cost of borrowing for further expansion. Unlike Enron shareholders, insiders—the corpo-



rate executives and selected investors, including divisions of banks that were lending to Enron—knew these subsidiaries were dubiously structured. But they ignored the dangers because Enron held out hope for fantastic returns—doubling their money or better in some years. The auditors for Arthur Andersen did not just overlook this chicanery. Like the lawyers who said it was all legal, the accountants were apparently paid well to help set it up. Nearly 900 of these subsidiaries were established in offshore tax havens like the Cayman Islands, notorious centers for money-laundering and financial concealment.

Fundamentally, Enron transformed itself from an energy supplier into an almost totally unregulated financial institution. The profits Enron generated came mainly from its on-line trading of electricity and natural gas. (Other trading, especially in telecommunications bandwidth, was less successful.) The bulk of this trading was in “derivatives,” complex financial instruments used to hedge or speculate about future prices. Unlike open futures markets in agricultural or financial commodities (like Treasury bonds), Enron not only ran the marketplace, but was a major participant in the trades. The derivative contracts were often opaque and confusing, even to experts. So this market was especially murky and open to manipulation.

To succeed Enron needed markets—starting with energy—that were deregulated, volatile and actively traded. Deregulation



provided the instability that created an incentive for hedging and speculation as well as opportunities for Enron to profit, often by taking advantage of minor discrepancies in prices within the marketplace. Clear, predictable information about energy prices typical of regulated utilities hurt Enron; chaos and confusion were its manna. Keynes described financial euphorias as bubbles forming on bubbles. Enron was blowing its own bubbles.

In the real-world economy, electricity deregulation has been a massive failure for consumers. Many can't easily take advantage of the confusing choices in deregulated markets—just like for telephone service. For them, deregulation most often means disinformation and overwhelming marketing madness. And in most places, energy prices have actually gone up.

Enron's machinations played a major role in driving up energy costs in California. (Emergency shortages soared after a bill deregulating energy trading pushed by Texas Republican Sen. Phil Gramm on behalf of Enron was passed, then ended when federal price controls were reimposed, according to Public Citizen.) One study concluded that electricity prices on the California-Oregon border recently dropped 30 percent simply because Enron went bankrupt and could no longer use its market power to set prices. Yet with widely fluctuating prices, it is harder for utilities to plan for new generating capacity, setting the stage for future shortages or supply manipulation and price hikes.

Enron is not the only sinner; neither is Andersen. Over the past six years, *Business Week* reports, investors have lost \$200 billion as a result of 783 audit failures at firms that overstated profits, and such incidents doubled from 1997 to 2000. The fallout from Enron has helped to precipitate other major bankruptcies, like Global Crossing, or reorganizations, like Tyco, as investors worry about the reliability of all corporate statements. Former Securities and Exchange Commissioner Arthur Levitt, whose efforts to tighten accounting practices were blocked by Congress, says that a "culture of gamesmanship"—a polite term for lying, cheating and deceiving—took hold in the frenzied new economy of the '90s.

Politicians helped create the fertile environment for growth of the disinformation economy. Gramm and his wife Wendy, a former director of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission who joined Enron's board shortly after retiring, pushed through key regulatory rulings and legislation that fostered derivative trading and kept Enron free from regulation. Enron's political contributions—disproportionately to the Republicans, especially to Bush and his cronies, but also to many Democrats—are now notorious. Maybe Bush didn't bail out a failing Enron, but he did end Clinton's plans to rein in foreign tax havens.

Bush's energy plan promoted 17 policies that Enron had lobbied for, including six visits with Vice President Dick Cheney while he headed the energy task force. Even within the industry, most of those proposals are controversial, such as promoting energy deregulation and derivatives, guaranteeing energy traders open access to all transmission lines, and repealing the Public Utility Holding Company Act (which restricts multi-state holding companies from diversifying into

ventures unrelated to their core utility business). But as part of the disinformation society—and in keeping with other Bush moves to restrict freedom of information and access to presidential records, Cheney is fighting to keep secret the deliberations of the energy task force, despite a lawsuit being filed by the General Accounting Office.

**B**ut Enron hasn't just corrupted individual politicians by buying influence through campaign contributions. The irony is that the political corruption ends up destroying one foundation of the market economy itself—reliable information—and exacerbating what economist Michael Perelman calls "the natural instability of markets."

Until the dot-com and stock market collapse, many analysts argued that computers, the Internet and telecommunications had created a "new industrial revolution" that had transformed the economy into a recession-proof fountain of growing productivity and profits. But Northwestern University economist Robert Gordon has concluded that nearly all of the accelerated productivity growth in the late '90s came from growth in manufacturing of durable goods, especially computers and related equipment. There was virtually no acceleration of productivity in the rest of the economy.

The hype about Internet business and the information economy spurred an investment boom, fed by brokerage firm stock promoters ("analysts") who even late last fall rated Enron a "buy." Enron was worth \$60 billion to shareholders before it tanked, wiping out many of its own workers' retirement funds. But most observers ignore damage Enron wreaked on the way up: Its exaggerated promise of returns drew invest-

ment away from other potential investments. What would the country be like if the billions wasted on Enron had been used rationally and for some real social good, not swept up in the throes of an economy built on lies and deceit?

Even within its own corporate walls, if Enron had plowed money into its wind power division instead of its fraudulent trading division, it could have helped reduce

national dependence on Middle Eastern oil and created more stable energy prices. Similarly, illusory high rates of return—profit and growth in stock value—at Enron and other "revolutionary" companies put unrealistic pressure on other businesses to match those returns, distorting investment decisions and helping to undermine some industries, including many domestic manufacturers.

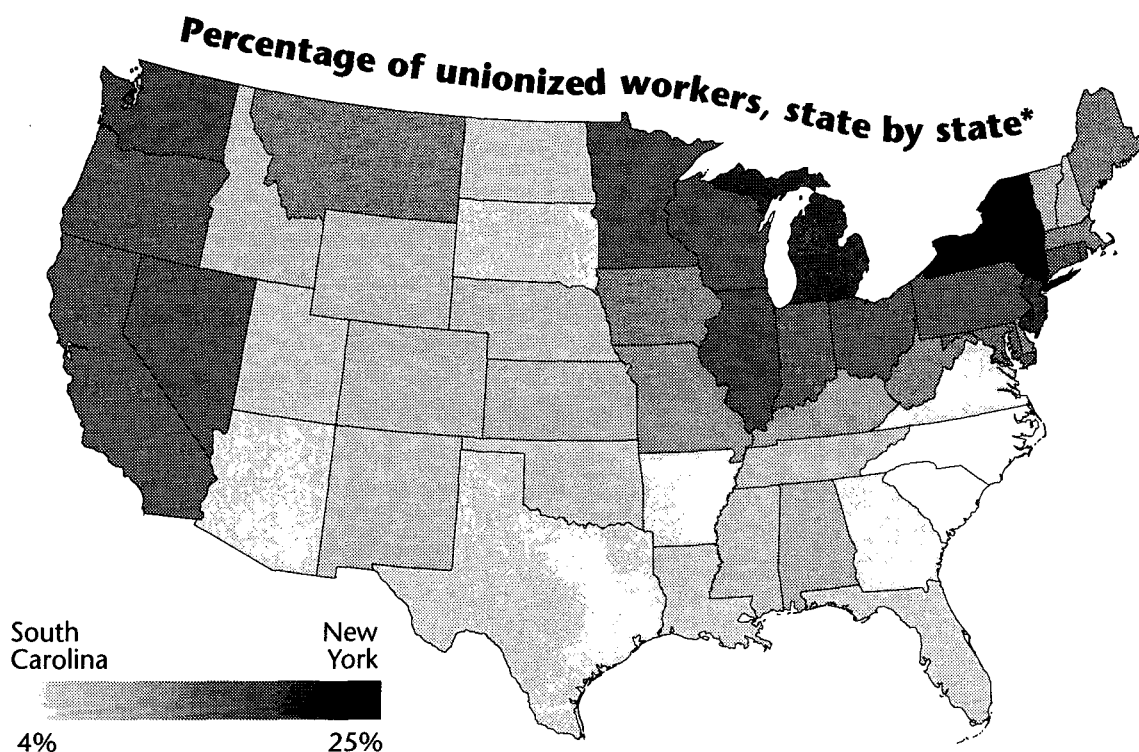
The tentative moves emerging in Washington toward regulation of accountants, pension plans, accounting rules and other troubled aspects of the Enron debacle are small, if necessary, steps toward the broader task of unmaking the disinformation economy. But the entire political culture has been so contaminated with disinformation that now—even in the wake of this scandal—both Republicans and Democrats are promoting further energy deregulation. Greed undermined professions that once claimed the public trust—accountants, lawyers, bankers—demonstrating the need for tighter regulation. But who can do that if government itself is corrupted? ■

**Keynes described  
financial euphorias  
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blowing its own bubbles.**

# Southern Bellwether

Unions won't survive unless they organize down in Dixie

By Ian Urbina



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Annual Household Survey of Union Members.  
\*Alaska is 21.9% unionized and Hawaii is 24.8%.  
Note: Data do not include workers who are self-employed.

**O**rganize or die" is the labor movement's mantra. Yet in all the calls for a nationwide push made during December's AFL-CIO convention, there still seems to be little strategy for one of labor's biggest and most enduring obstacles—organizing in the South. "Most unions are simply not yet willing to commit to campaigns in these states," says Nelson Lichtenstein, a labor historian at the University of California, Santa Barbara. "But they can't afford to wait."

Aside from being the main source of the hemorrhaging of factory jobs overseas, the South drags down national standards in working conditions and wages. Northern victories in organizing, job security, livable wages or improved labor laws can only be temporary with the entrance to a Third World free-trade zone at the Mason-Dixon line. While 13.5 percent of the national work force is unionized, southern states like North Carolina and South Carolina, for example, hover at a 4 percent union presence. The state of New

York alone has more union members than almost all of the southern states combined.

The obstacles to organizing in the South are huge. Since NAFTA, southern employers have gone unmatched—in half of union drives, according to Cornell University researcher Kate Bronfenbrenner—in using the illegal but highly effective threat of plant closure to discourage workers from organizing. The recent passage of "fast track" trade promotion authority will only encourage the tactic.

Southern managers are also far more apt to use race to divide union support. "When unions arrive, the very first thing many Southern bosses do is tell white workers to get ready for all black managers," says Stewart Acuff, a deputy regional director of the AFL-CIO. Right-to-work laws—which exist in 22 states, allowing workers in a union shop to opt out of paying dues—act as further disincentive for unions to head south.

Anti-unionism is deeply institutionalized in the region. "Few people in power give unions any credence," says Paul



Luebke, a professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and a state representative from Durham. Not only has labor history gone untaught in southern schools and universities, but working-class families also get a steady diet of anti-union warnings. "You know, the usual stuff, communists and corruption."

Anti-labor sentiment tends to be much more overt than in the North. "Organizers down there are often completely on their own," Acuff says. "Mention the word union, and southern politicians of all shades disappear into thin air."

**S**outhern textiles has proven the most troubling industry for unions as foreign competition devastates the domestic industry. The case of North Carolina's Fieldcrest Cannon is instructive. For years, the company, now owned by Pillowtex Corp., persisted in anti-union scare tactics, unfazed by repeated citations from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). But at the same time, the Union of Needletrades Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) waged a patient and creative campaign, and the tide slowly shifted. After 25 years and four prior attempts, the 5,200 workers of Fieldcrest Cannon finally won the right to form a union in June 1999. "Folks just reached a breaking point," says Janet Patterson, a 52-year-old sheet hemmer who made \$26,000 a year after 36 years at the mill. "Winning the union was one of the happiest days of my life."

Indeed, it was an historic victory, and UNITE was unique in its long-term commitment to the effort. But the celebration was short-lived. A year and a half later, Pillowtex, \$1 billion in debt, filed for bankruptcy. "Right when the entire industry was against the wall, Pillowtex's last owner decided to buy up a huge part of the market, putting the company deep in the red," says Richard Resua, the central North Carolina district director for UNITE. "A macho move, but not a very smart one." More than 1,500 Pillowtex workers have been laid off.

Nevertheless, there are some glimmers of hope in the region. Though certainly not compensating for the exit of the textiles industry, foreign automakers have begun moving into the South. Currently, at least one-third of the vehicles turned out in the United States have southern roots. Tennessee, which now ranks third among automaking states, didn't produce a single vehicle in 1980. Nissan has created 4,000 jobs in Canton, Mississippi. A new BMW plant is under construction in Greer, South Carolina, promising 4,300 new jobs. Meanwhile, in Vance, Alabama, the Mercedes-Benz factory is pledging 2,000 new positions by 2005.

It's unclear whether these new jobs will translate into new union members, since many of these foreign manufacturers moved to the South specifically for its anti-union climate. At the Nissan plant in Smyrna, Tennessee, for example, the United Auto Workers union has tried to organize workers four times since the plant opened in 1983, failing most recently in an October vote by a 2 to 1 margin. Yet Bob King of the UAW says he's optimistic about prospects for organizing new shops in these states. "We've got 70,000 to 100,000 members in the South, and there's no reason to think we couldn't get more."

**A**n added barrier to southern organizing is the lack of collective bargaining rights for government workers. In the North, labor laws provide at least marginal protection for the right of both public and private sector employees to organize. Since the government is less apt than private employers to get into dirty anti-union fights, public workers have joined unions in high numbers. As a result, the northern public sector offers a strong base of support as unions initiate campaigns in difficult industries.

But in much of the South it is illegal for public sector workers to bargain collectively, and thus there are no safe zones for union organizing. Consequently, 37 percent of the northern public sector is unionized, whereas that number is less than 7 percent in the South. "The right wing in the southern states remains on high-alert regarding unions," says Paul Booth of AFSCME, which represents public employees. "They believe that if they can cut organizing off at the public sector, it will never have a chance to spread to the private sector."

But unions increasingly are finding ways around the lack of collective bargaining rights for southern public workers. Texas teachers and public school personnel, for example, have organized in spite of legal barriers. "Basically, our approach has been if you can't beat it, go around it," says Matt Jacob of the

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*"Mention the word union, and  
southern politicians of all shades  
disappear into thin air."*

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American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which in the past two years has gained more than 12,000 new members in Texas alone. "If there is bad law on the state level, circumvent it by getting new school board policy on the district level."

While the governor and state legislators have proved intransigent, local school boards often have been far more amenable to granting teachers the right to representation through "exclusive consultation" elections, which do not provide teachers with collective-bargaining rights or a binding contract, but do allow them to choose a single organization to consult on their behalf. Teachers in Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Houston, El Paso and Austin all have held such elections and opted to join the AFT.

In Dallas, the AFT won the right to represent 9,000 teachers and support staff and helped broker the largest pay increase in the history of the district. At the last minute, when the school board disclosed its plans to lure new teachers by granting novices a disproportionately higher raise than veterans, the AFT picketed. Lacking the right to strike, teachers resorted to alternative means. Within the classroom, they pressured the administration by rigidly following schedules down to the minute and by refusing to use even a cent of their own money for school expenses. School officials ultimately acquiesced and gave the veterans a fair pay raise.

"Though Texas teachers are still prohibited from having a contract, with exclusive consultation we're building the base of support necessary to eventually change that," Jacob says. "At the same time, we're not doing too bad at winning some real improvements in working conditions."

**T**he AFL-CIO's policy shift concerning undocumented workers will also boost organizing in the South, which has seen an large influx of Latinos. By 2025, the Hispanic populations of Georgia, North Carolina and Arkansas are expected to grow 70 percent or more, compared to overall growth rates of less than 20 percent. Over the past decade, Census figures show that 800,000 Latinos left California for other states, many of them southern ones. A decade ago, North Carolina farm workers were almost entirely black; today, 90 percent are Latino. "The shift occurring is incredible," says Leon Fink, a University of North Carolina historian, who suggests that the changing demographics might bode well for unions. "Latinos have much more class consciousness and well-established cultural and political traditions of working together."

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## *A decade ago, North Carolina farmworkers were almost entirely black; today, 90 percent are Latino.*

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Research by Cornell University's Bronfenbrenner indicates that organizing drives at work sites with more than 60 percent Latino workers posted win rates of 43 percent, compared to 27 percent success rates in units with less than 60 percent Latinos. At the same time, the Latino arrival will raise certain new difficulties. Tension between black and Latino communities will rise with job competition. Consequently, so too will race-baiting by southern employers, making the need for broad labor coalitions all the greater. Bronfenbrenner says, "It's going to be absolutely essential for organizers in the South to lock arms with Latino organizations, women's groups, black churches, student associations and environmental groups."

Some such coalitions are beginning to emerge. In North Carolina, for example, a state where 79 percent of white inhabitants have said that they would oppose living among Latinos, unions have begun forging some interesting black-Hispanic alliances. The African-American Latino Alliance, for instance, is jointly led by the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union (UE150) and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). UE150 accounts for the bulk of the predominantly black service personnel who work at UNC campuses across the state, while FLOC is organizing the state's 136,000 Latino migrant farm workers. "The race for low-wage jobs has created serious tensions between two communities that should be strategic allies," says Saladin Muham-

mad, lead organizer for UE150. "But it's a good sign when you have black cafeteria workers telling white university students about the situation with Latino farm hands."

The Unite for Dignity campaign in Florida, originally a coordinated effort between UNITE and SEIU to organize the state's health care workers, was unusually effective at bridging the gaps in a diverse industry and region. "It was only after we got leaders from these different communities talking to each other that we were able to start real organizing," says Monica Russo, director of Unite for Dignity, which in the past two years has won 35 NLRB elections at nursing homes across the state.

Through gradual give-and-take, Unite for Dignity patched together a grassroots base, drawing particularly strong support from Miami's Haitian community. In Tallahassee, Unite for Dignity helped mobilize a 50,000-person march against Gov. Jeb Bush's anti-affirmative action measures. "We've created some unusual solidarity here," Russo says. "Where else do you find African-Americans, Salvadorans, Haitians and Cubans marching together?"

Successful living-wage campaigns also have contributed to the shifting labor climate in the South. In the last several years, Durham, Miami, San Antonio, Alexandria and New Orleans have enacted living-wage ordinances that require businesses receiving public subsidies or leasing public lands to pay their employees substantially more than minimum wages, usually around \$8.20 an hour. Many ordinances also open the way to unionization by stipulating that employers must remain neutral during union drives, and the grassroots organizing it takes to get such measures passed is invaluable for later campaigns. Currently, efforts are picking up steam for living-wage initiatives to be passed in Birmingham, Dallas, Little Rock, Louisville and Lexington.

**S**outhern opinion of unions is up, according to a recent poll released by Hart Research. Of southern employees, 45 percent said that they would vote for a union if given the chance. Up from 40 percent in 1997, that number finally places southern and northern popular opinion on equal footing. If southerners can change their outlook on organized labor, unions can surely do the same toward the South.

But the AFL-CIO needs to put much more than rhetoric behind its organizing efforts, especially if unions are to enter the most difficult regions. "Locals need further incentive from the top. The AFL-CIO may be just a federation that can't compel its member unions to head south, but it's a federation with a hell of a lot of money," says Stanley Aronowitz of the City University of New York. "Rather than spending so much on political candidates, they need to put much more toward organizing."

While the AFL-CIO put more than \$21 million into new organizing efforts in 2000, it spent twice as much on the election that same year. The key to southern organizing is long-term commitment, and for many unions the high cost of staying in the South has not seemed worth it. With the current recession, labor may be tempted to circle the wagons rather than push further into uncharted territory. Though expensive in the short run, leaving the south unorganized in the long run will prove fatal. ■

**Ian Urbina** is a journalist in Washington.



# Autumn of the Patriarch

By Carl Bromley

**A**ngelo Giuseppe Roncalli, later known as Pope John XXIII, discerned the signs of the times with semiotic urgency—and helped initiate, when least expected, a revolution. Looking back on John's

## Pope John XXIII

By Thomas Cahill  
Lipper/Viking  
176 pages, \$19.95

## Breaking Faith: The Pope, the People and the Fate of Catholicism

By John Cornwell  
Viking Compass  
256 pages, \$24.95

## Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit

By Garry Wills  
Doubleday  
326 pages, \$25

## The Popes against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism

By David I. Kertzer  
Knopf  
355 pages, \$27.95

Second Vatican Council of the early '60s—and the optimism it unleashed—is a sobering experience: How distant seems the council's attempt to clear the dead weight of the Nazi collaborator Pope Pius XII's legacy, how radical its embrace of modernity, and, well, how alien its promotion of a joyful, ecumenical and socially conscious Catholicism.

Though John only reigned for five years, his effect on ordinary Catholics and non-Catholics alike was extraordinary. As a young lad, I would visit my great grandmother's room at the top of the house and find, among the stagnant smell of bottled Lourdes water she swigged, in pride of place a photograph and letter John XXIII had sent her. I would also hear tales of the jokes Italians told about their Roberto Benigni-esque pontiff. Thomas Cahill recounts in his new biography a typical story of when Roncalli was the papal nuncio in postwar France:

He was a delightful host with a superb kitchen, and he was not infrequently seen at diplomatic receptions with a glass of champagne in one hand, sometimes with a cigarette in the other. At one of these gatherings, so the story goes, he was approached by a woman of considerable *décolletage*, who wore a large crucifix between her mountainous breasts. "Quelle Golgothe!" (What a Calvary!) exclaimed the nuncio merrily.

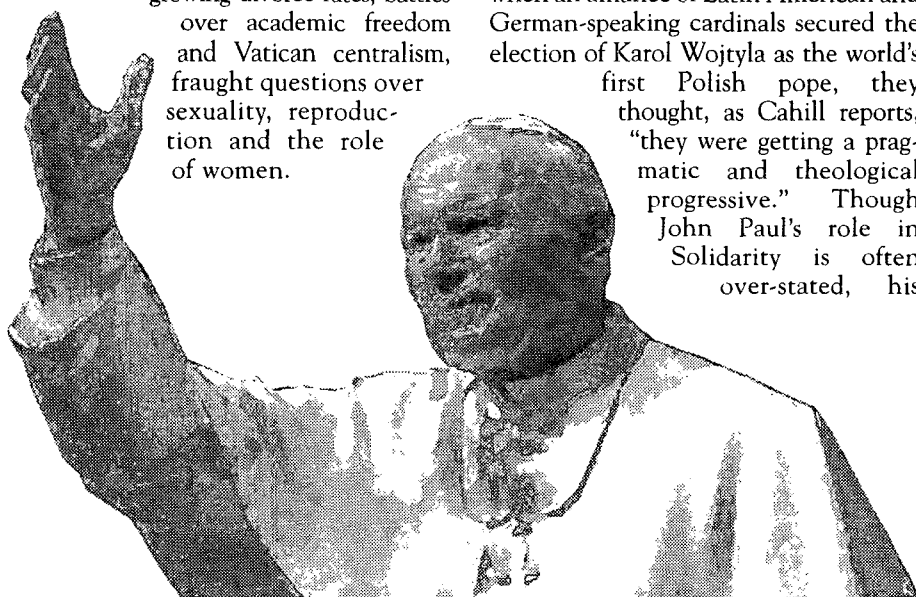
From the depressing vantage of the 23rd year of Pope John Paul II's reign, John XXIII now seems a fluke. One wonders whether there are any reformers still out there in the reactionary age of the Pop Star Pope, when the dismal institutional shape of the church is belied by its leader's tarmac-kissing global profile. The Greatest Show on Earth! Six hundred and seventy thousand miles traveled on 84 papal trips! Thirteen million people in mass attendance! Fifteen thousand intimate personal encounters!

But as the media fixate on the pope's one-man band, the church itself is, as John Cornwell tells in *Breaking Faith*, "assailed by a grim accumulation of woes": plummeting attendance at mass, defections to other faiths, a collapsing priesthood, the decline of Catholic marriage and growing divorce rates, battles over academic freedom and Vatican centralism, fraught questions over sexuality, reproduction and the role of women.

**C**onservative Catholics blame the crisis on a "culture of death"—abortion, sex before marriage, homosexuality—promoted by secular society and its culture industries. They often speak in conspiratorial terms about Catholic-bashing in the media, as if the problem was the media, not the extraordinary level of sexual hypocrisy and abuse in the ranks of the clergy. And so, in an age of political correctness, Catholicism has self-pityingly adopted an embattled posture of "the faith that dare not speak its name." At a special synod in 1999, the bishops of Europe claimed Europeans lived "as though God did not exist."

Cornwell's *Breaking Faith*, Cahill's *Pope John XXIII* and Garry Wills' *Papal Sin* are, by and large, sincere, liberal interventions into the debate on the future of the church, a debate magnified by the pope's frail age and the speculation over who might succeed him. All three authors concede that secular pressures have had a remarkable effect on the Catholic congregation, but insist that it is the nature of the papacy—its institutions and its disastrous response to modernity—that bears that ultimate responsibility for the Church's parlous state.

It seems strange now to think that when an alliance of Latin American and German-speaking cardinals secured the election of Karol Wojtyla as the world's first Polish pope, they thought, as Cahill reports, "they were getting a pragmatic and theological progressive." Though John Paul's role in Solidarity is often over-stated, his



effect was remarkable, and it's here that his image as a champion of social justice and religious freedom resides.

At Solidarity's height, Daniel Singer reported that the pope was "gathering huge and enthusiastic crowds, dominating the political stage, speaking like the spiritual master of the land. ... His triumph was the certificate of ideological and political bankruptcy for an allegedly communist regime." In fact, as Singer slyly noted, the miserable state of Polish communism bestowed on the Polish church—which had a miserable pre-war record of its own—a "new virginity. ... Instead of an institution on the side of exploitation and inequality the pope looked like the redeemer, not just a spiritual shepherd, but the champion of national and social revolt."

John Paul's intervention now looks like rank opportunism. While he has paid lip-service to the rights of working people and the poor, even uttering sentiments last May Day that could be construed as vaguely antiglobalist, the pope has used all the resources at his disposal to contain and isolate the radical Liberation Theology movements of Latin America. Elsewhere, he has halted the democratic direction of Vatican II, transforming bishops into "branch managers" responding to his diktat, promoting an oppressive intellectual culture that muzzles religious dissent among the clergy (hounding them out for their views on AIDS, homosexuality and the ordination of women) and issues gag orders to controversial theologians at Catholic institutions.

Cornwell describes this as a "new Inquisition" transmitted through authoritarian ecclesiastical structures and vehemently conservative Catholic media. The late Bernard Häring, a moral theologian who had been persecuted by the Nazis, fell victim to John Paul's church because of his dissident views on contraception. "I would prefer Hitler's courts to another papal interrogation," he wrote in the British Catholic weekly *The Tablet*. "Hitler's trials were certainly more dangerous, but they were not an offense to my honor."

Wojtyła's Catholicism has a cold, metallic embrace, "morose, even morbid, with little place for laughter or

enjoyment," as Cahill suggests. The baptized faithful are called to chastity, "whether they are married or single," sex being only chaste if performed in a state of marriage and fertility. As Garry Wills blithely notes, "John Paul makes the sex act so holy that only monks are worthy of it."

Then there is the creepy cult of the Virgin Mary, so close to John Paul's heart that he claims it was she who saved him from an assassin's bullet in 1981; the Virgin supposedly foretold the attempted assassination in her prophecies in Fatima, Portugal in 1917. For Cornwell, these tales are the "apotheosis of papal narcissism and ego-

**Pope John XXIII's Vatican Council promoted a joyful, ecumenical and socially conscious Catholicism.**



tism"—prophecies about communism and atheism that have rallied a "dark, apocalyptic" right-wing cult that John Paul is quite cozy with.

**B**oth Cornwell's and Wills' books are propelled by a deep Catholic faith that complement and overlap each other, but there are differences of emphasis, organization and orientation. Cornwell is a well-traveled and well-connected journalist, cut from the cloth of English liberal Catholicism. *Breaking Faith* is in many ways a deeply confessional memoir about Cornwell the former seminarian who left and then, many years later, rejoined the Catholic fold, interlaced with a journalist's journey through the nooks and corners of contemporary Catholicism. Like any journey, there are peaks, troughs, wrong turns and detours, and sometimes the blend of memoir and reportage is structurally awkward.

But few writers, as he has shown in his two previous books, *A Thief in the Night* and *Hitler's Pope*, know the inner world of official Catholicism as thoroughly as Cornwell. Much of the book, chatty and

anecdotal as it is, is fascinating, especially its exploration of the conveyor-belt-like quality of the papal beatification machine (one a week, historically unprecedented) and the miracles industry. But *Breaking Faith* is ultimately motivated by Cornwell's great fear that the church is heading for another great schism if another pope of John Paul's character succeeds him—which is likely, since a majority of new cardinals are his picks.

Cornwell is contemptuous of traditional Catholic conservatives, "some of whom do not care that the Catholic Church might dwindle to a small remnant to achieve authentic integrity." But even if he is sympathetic to a radical communitarian vision of the church, he is deeply ambivalent about its effect on the church's health, fearing that progressive calls for radical decentralization are "unrealistic" and likely to inflame certain centrifugal forces. Cornwell is, in a sense, a religious Fabian and advocates Catholic regeneration animated by the spirit of *agape* that flourished under John

XXIII—a religious and political pluralism driven by the collective imperative to love unjudgmentally, orchestrated by a benevolent and loving pope. But Cornwell's model closely resembles the state from classic liberal theory, an ideal type that may well be as unrealistic as the progressive model he critiques.

Garry Wills' *Papal Sin* is a far more focused polemic, a dazzling, relentlessly reasoned account that locates the current crisis in the church's institutional and ideological structures. Why, he asks, is it that though the media are fascinated by church teaching on birth control, abortion, celibacy and women priests, there is (largely) a burning silence about these issues in our everyday Catholic life? Conservatives claim the laity are too resistant to church teaching while priests are too cowardly to transmit it. To the contrary, Wills avers: "The arguments for much of what passes as current church doctrine are so intellectually contemptible that mere self-respect forbids a man to voice them as his own."

"Even a bright and devout man as Pope Paul VI," Wills writes, "could



endorse [in 1968] a truly perverse teaching on contraception—one rejected by his own picked panel of loyal and intelligent Catholics, priestly and lay persons—because advisers [including our present pope] convinced him that it would shake people's faith in the church for the papacy to reverse course."

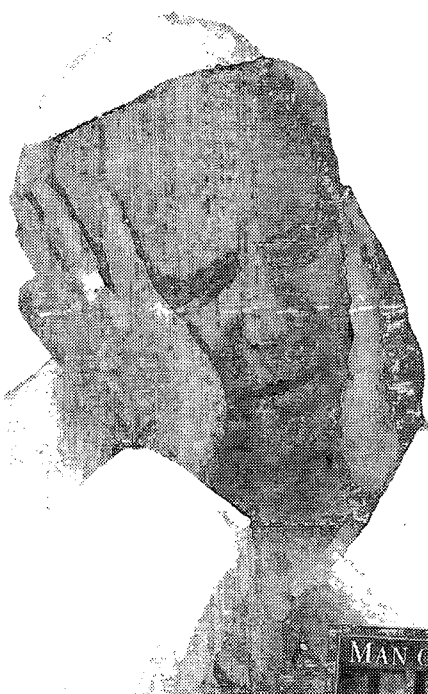
Truth therefore is subordinated to ecclesiastical tactic, "a structure of deceit," where the imperative is to maintain a pristine papal record. Even though theoretically the pope is infallible only on "doctrines of faith," the assumption of infallibility colors all areas of papal conduct.

This tactic was especially evident upon the recent, disgraceful publication of *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, a commemorative papal document on the Holocaust that devoted most of its energy to absolving the church. *We Remember* cleverly separates the exterminatory logic of Nazi anti-Semitism from an older, defunct anti-Judaism characterized by a mistrust toward the Jewish religion per se that portrayed Jews as Christ-killers, which "some Christians" had erroneously used to justify scapegoating and discrimination: "The Shoah was the work of a thoroughly modern neopagan regime. Its anti-Semitism had its roots outside of Christianity."

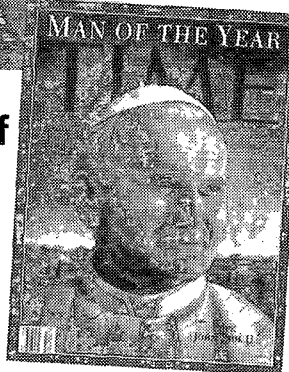
One of the virtues of David Kertzer's new book *The Popes against the Jews* is that it demolishes this phony division erected between "our anti-Semitism and theirs." For Kertzer, the devils are in the details of the Vatican archives and the Catholic media of the past 200 years. Barred from property ownership, the professions, the university and travel, confined to the ghetto, made to wear yellow badges on their clothes, forbidden normal social intercourse with their Christian neighbors ... doesn't that sound familiar? Those were the rules of the Papal States, when the Jews were hounded as mere deicides, before "modern" anti-Semitism arrived.

Church anti-Semitism was remarkably supple, however, relaying and ultimately dovetailing with the modern, pseudo-scientific brand when, after Italy's unification (and the church's loss of its Papal States) in

1871, Pope Pius IX declared jihad against modern, secular and democratic life—which he conflated with Jewry and freemasonry. Leading Jesuit journals, cleared by the Holy See, would devote thousands upon thousands of words ranting about Jews being a parasitic "race, people and nation." Such imagery and conspiracy theory inspired the fraudulent *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which would later resonate with leading church members. The church ultimately took aim at communism—which it conflated again with a masonic Jewish conspiracy—and as Kertzer duly notes, "fascism had much to recommend itself" to the Catholic hierarchy.



**But the church of John Paul II has a cold, metallic embrace, and he uses all the resources at his disposal to muzzle religious dissent among the clergy.**



Vatican apologists tend to prize a few rare, repentant, pro-Jewish remarks Pius XI made late in his reign, including a secret encyclical he was having prepared on the subject in 1938. But the damage had been done a decade and a half earlier, when he, with indecent haste, recognized Mussolini, thereby neutralizing any anti-Fascist resistance from the Catholic Popular Party, which was allied with the Socialists. In 1932, Pius XI's papal nuncio in Berlin—the future Pius XII—concluded a similar deal with the ascendant Nazis, killing any opposition from the faith-based, anti-Nazi Central Party.

Much is also made of the fact that both Piuses protested Nazi and Fascist policy. But the terms of protest were limited to complaints about the breaking of concordats the Vatican had entered into with Hitler and Mussolini—no word about the persecution of the Jews. And when the Vatican protested the racial laws of both regimes, it was because the Holy See didn't like the laws concerning Jews who had converted to Catholicism.

The church claims, retrospectively, that it would have been too dangerous to confront the Holocaust publicly, even though the Danish Lutheran State Church, the French Catholic Bishops, the Orthodox Bulgarian synod of bishops and the Greek Orthodox archbishop of Athens' public denunciation of the Nazi onslaught against the Jews had a remarkable effect on saving Jewish lives.

And finally, as the controversial Holocaust historian Daniel Jonah Goldhagen asks in a recent

issue of *The New Republic*: "Why, as a moral or practical matter, did [Pius XII] excommunicate all Communists in the world in 1949, including millions who never shed blood, but did not excommunicate a single German or non-German who served Hitler?"

Of this the church is silent. Wills contends that, because of the structures of deceit embedded in the church, *We Remember's* official take on the Shoah "not only ignored the past centuries of persecution ... but it denied that Christians had any role in inflicting the Holocaust. ... Its

memory, far from being useful to the cause of true understanding that would prevent another Holocaust, is useful only to the fiction that the Vatican wants to maintain about itself."

To add insult to injury, the church embellishes such fiction in its recent attempts to "Catholicize" the Holocaust by beatifying Nazi victims who happened to be Catholic as religious martyrs, even though they were killed either for their anti-Nazism or because they were Jewish converts.

**B**y contrast, even as scathing a critic of Catholic anti-Semitism as Goldhagen reserves these words for John XXIII: "a progressive and humble man ... a genuine friend of the Jews, having himself, as papal legate in Turkey, saved the lives of many Jews during the war by providing them with counterfeit baptismal documents." Though Cahill's biography is brief and impressionistic, the spirit of John XXIII leaps from every page and embraces the reader. A Roman chambermaid once asked Hannah Arendt, "Madam, this pope was a real Christian. How could that be?"

It could be because John was schooled in a social Catholicism that often had been suppressed by the official church. Its soil was working-class and peasant Italy, with its socialist, anarchist, trade unionist and anti-clerical but Christian traditions: a tradition, we might say, that despite Pius XII, saved more than 80 percent of Italy's Jews from the Holocaust. Wills recalls such a tradition at the end of *Papal Sin* when he invokes the anti-authoritarian models of Sister Helen Prejean "telling people that capital punishment is revenge and not a Christian action," Daniel Berrigan "caring for those stricken with AIDS," and his brother Philip "telling us that no one has the right to build weapons that can destroy the world."

You don't have to be a believer to believe that this is a tradition worth fighting for. ■

**Carl Bromley** has written on culture and politics in *The Nation*, *Cineaste* and *Croonenbergh's Fly*. He is currently working on a novel.

# Carey Quite Contrary

By Kate Julian

**I**n California, everything seems to be reversed, to occur out of the natural order of events, to be upside down or lopsided," wrote Carey McWilliams of

## Fool's Paradise: A Carey McWilliams Reader

Edited by Dean Stewart and Jeannine Gendar  
Heyday Books  
264 pages, \$18.95

the place that was his muse and enduring theme. "Even to describe the state accurately is to run the risk of being branded a liar or a lunatic."

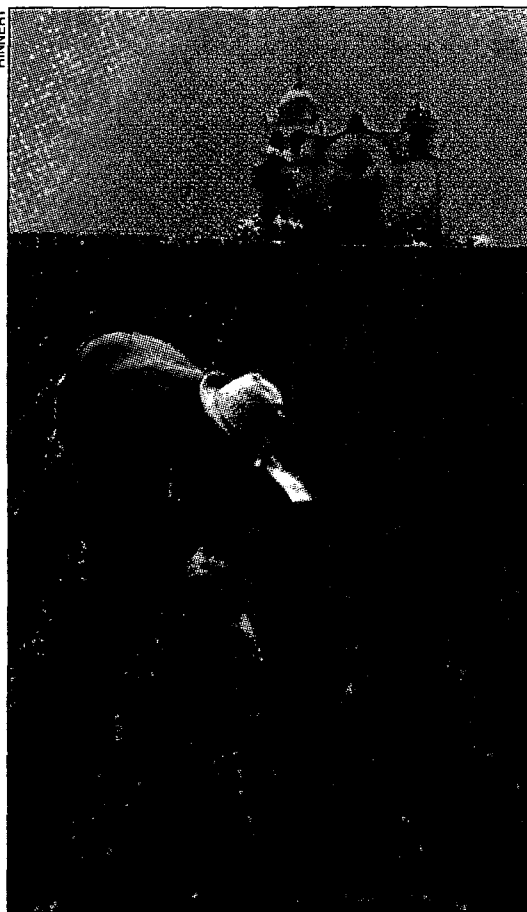
indictment of California's agricultural system, *Factories in the Field*, by dubbing him "Agricultural Pest No. 1, worse than pear blight or boll weevil." Two years later, Republican gubernatorial candidate Earl Warren made firing McWilliams from his position as state commissioner of immigration and housing a top campaign promise.

All this was payback for McWilliams' tireless work as debunker of California's myths and as self-appointed advocate for the exploited. Decades later, his many books and articles for the popular press remain authoritative accounts of social struggle in California, and his impact upon subsequent observers of the

California scene is so broad as to be almost inestimable. Writers and academics running the gamut from Mike Davis, whose chronicles of class oppression, racism and environmental ruin are distinctly noir, to Kevin Starr, whose popular works on California history border on rose-colored, continue to cite McWilliams. Even a first-time reader will likely find him strangely familiar.

But despite the lasting salience of McWilliams' work, the literature devoted to his life and works is sparse, consisting of a few short journal articles and a single dissertation. Save for McWilliams' own 1979 memoir, he has garnered no biography, and until now, his works have lacked an anthology. Small Berkeley publisher Heyday Books steps in to fill this breach with *Fool's Paradise: A Carey McWilliams Reader*, a collection culled from McWilliams' many books and magazine articles. This new anthology does not quite do McWilliams justice—it is awkwardly organized, with some puzzling inclusions and regrettable omissions—but it does provide a capable and long-overdue introduction.

**M**cWilliams was not born in California, and he did not die there. He lived there for only 28 of his 75 years, and produced his best work on the state in the space of little more than a decade of that time. The son of a wealthy white Colorado cattle rancher and state senator, he moved to Los Angeles in



McWilliams, perhaps the most prescient of California's chroniclers, was branded these and more. In 1939, the Associated Farmers, a militantly anti-labor coalition of agribusiness interests, responded to McWilliams' scathing



1922, enrolled at the University of Southern California, and earned his bachelor's degree while moonlighting in the business department of the *Los Angeles Times*. After graduation, he went

**To California's big agribusiness coalition, McWilliams was "Pest No. 1, worse than pear blight or boll weevil."**

on to law school, married and entered a successful Pasadena law firm—all while simultaneously embarking upon a second career as a writer.

It was at the urging of H.L. Mencken that McWilliams authored his first book, a biography of San Francisco writer Ambrose Bierce. "Mencken encouraged my father as a writer," explains Wilson Carey McWilliams in his foreword to *Fool's Paradise*, "and he reciprocated by imitating Mencken's hairstyle (parted straight down the middle) and his drinking habits (Bourbon Manhattans)." McWilliams spent the next few years writing literary history and criticism for various magazines and socializing with an impressive circle of Los Angeles writers, including Louis Adamic, John Fante, William Saroyan, Nathanael West and William Faulkner.

Not until the turmoil of Depression-era California had begun its crescendo did McWilliams become engaged in politics. Against the backdrop of massive labor unrest and Upton Sinclair's campaign for governor on a platform to end poverty, McWilliams developed an intense interest in the plight of California's farm laborers. This interest culminated in *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Labor in California*.

Hailed as a nonfiction *Grapes of Wrath* upon its publication in 1939, the book was the product of McWilliams' travels through California's fields, his involvement with labor organizing, and countless hours spent sifting through records and poring over yellowed newspaper accounts. It presented a history previously unrecorded—"a hidden history," he wrote at the time—of the state's farm industry. Today it is considered a milestone in social history.

McWilliams soon became fascinated with the relationship between class and race. The subject inspired much of his most passionate and groundbreaking writing, and ultimately generated four books: *Brothers under the Skin* (1943), *Prejudice: Japanese-Americans: Symbol of Racial Intolerance* (1944, the first book to appear on Japanese internment), *A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America* (1945) and *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (1950).

Three of them are excerpted here. From widespread lynchings in the 19th century to 20th-century signs excluding "Negroes and Mexicans" from theaters and roller rinks, the California that emerges from these selections is violent and racially charged. McWilliams connects California's "attempt to Jim Crow the Chinese" with the rampant racism of the American South, noting how southern and western senators collaborated to pass legislation barring Chinese immigration. In so doing, he demolishes the image of California as a haven from racial strife.

America's entry into World War II brought the internment of Japanese-

Americans, and the ensuing years were no kinder to California's Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. "It was a foregone conclusion," explains McWilliams, "that Mexicans would be substituted as the major scapegoat group once the Japanese were removed." McWilliams' narrative of racial tensions in home-front Los Angeles is riveting, from the "Sleepy Lagoon" show trial, in which 17 Mexican-American youths were convicted of a single murder, to the so-called Zoot-Suit riots of 1943, in which thousands of white soldiers and civilians roamed the streets of L.A. over 11 nights, terrorizing and beating young Mexican-American men.

When the chaos of World War II had started to subside, McWilliams published *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land*, the first of two popular books devoted to California. Selections reprinted here address the Californian predilection for utopian schemes and the place of water in the region's psyche and politics. Also included is

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McWilliams' classic piece on the state's "mission legend," where he takes up the contradiction between Anglo Californians' romantic obsession with their state's "Mission-Spanish past" and the poor treatment of contemporary Mexican-Americans. Material from *California: The Great Exception*, written shortly before McWilliams left the state in 1950 for New York and editorship of *The Nation*, is regrettably absent: He once described it as the summary of his efforts to understand the state.

But in its place, the *Reader's* final section is devoted to short pieces from *The Nation* on California's political scene. Collected here for the first time, they include descriptions of Earl Warren's tenure as governor and of the Tenney Committee (a California forerunner of HUAC), as well as such treasures as a 1950 description of Richard Nixon as "a dapper little man with an astonishing capacity for petty malice."

Even from New York, McWilliams' eyes were trained closely on California. References to early political consultants Murray Chotiner and the Spencer-Roberts firm suggest that McWilliams recognized their significance to California politics—and anticipated the emergence of paid political consulting as a national phenomenon—before almost anyone else. "How to Succeed with the Backlash," a look at the racial overtones of Ronald Reagan's gubernatorial campaign—"one of the most subtle and intensive racist political campaigns ever waged in a Northern or Western state"—is both incisive and disquietingly prophetic. The volume concludes with "Paradise Reagan-ed," written on the occasion of the Gipper's 1966 election. It is McWilliams at his most caustic and disaffected.

But it would be a mistake to remember him on this note. Although he was a piercingly ironic critic to the end, his was a criticism rooted in a profound sense of social justice and an abiding sense that California should, and could, be better. It would also be a mistake to remember McWilliams simply as a champion of California exceptionalism. When McWilliams is invoked today, it is most often for his commentary on California the quirky, California the anomalous, California the "island on the land."

While he found much that was spectacular and bizarre in California—he

once said that in 1920s Los Angeles he had found himself a "ringside seat at the year-round circus"—he also understood how intimately the state's fate was intertwined with the rest of the nation. Here, at the edge of the Pacific, was America's future, writ large and run amok. As he put it, "Here the swiftness of transition from rural to urban, from hardihood to wealth, has been most pronounced,

here the social neuroticism produced by such a transition is most widespread, and here the extremes between 'lowest' and 'highest' are most patent and glaring."

On this count, McWilliams was no liar, no lunatic and certainly no fool. ■

**Kate Julian**, formerly of *Lingua Franca*, is a research associate at the Council on Foreign Relations.



## What's the Plan?

By Evan Endicott

**T**he Dismemberment Plan, a four-piece band from D.C., stand at a punk-rock crossroads. One fork leads the way to mainstream success and MTV heavy rotation. But they don't have

**Change**  
The Dismemberment Plan  
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Day-Glo hair or put porn stars on their album covers, and they certainly don't release Michael Jackson covers as singles.

The other path leads back to the underground that spawned them. But the Plan may not be welcome there either, as hardliners would surely balk at their penchant for synthesizers, samplers and guitar effects. And yet for all their refinements in sound, the Plan are the direct descendants of punk innovators and icons Fugazi, Jawbox and Shudder to Think, bands that once ruled the D.C. scene.

Over the course of four full-length

albums in eight years, the Plan have developed and refined a sound that mixes equal parts Elliott Smith pop smarts, Talking Heads white-boy funk and Shudder to Think weirdness. Throw in the Minutemen's sense of humor and you have a rough sketch. But like all forward-thinking punks, the Plan are more than the sum of their influences. Despite all the reference points, the group's albums sound startlingly unique. Only a deeper exploration of their work uncovers the punk

**Divisive politics, retro-kitsch and resistance to change have bled punk rock dry.**

family tree many youngsters wouldn't know existed if it dropped a bushel of mohawks in their lap: bands like Television



and Gang of Four, art students and radicals who pushed punk beyond four chords and a snotty British accent.

The Plan push further. They are a smart band, musically and lyrically, but they are not elitist (lead singer Travis Morrison candidly admits his taste for Britney-flavored cheese). They engage brain and booty equally, and this is the real secret to their success. It's the thing bands like Talking Heads understood, and the reason almost anyone can appreciate the music of George Clinton. Because, as human beings trapped on the physical plane, sound alone is not enough—we must shimmy and shake and move.

**E**mergency & I was released in 1999 and proved the Plan knew how to groove. Tracks like “Spider in the Snow” (which mixed equal parts ’80s synth-pop and Lee “Scratch” Perry dub-rhythm) and “A Life of Possibilities” (in which Morrison emulates Prince’s falsetto over a dirty bassline) rocked and rolled like some demented disco-beast with steel-toed boots and a union-jack tattoo. Hidden beneath the butt-shaking, Morrison’s lyrics revealed a wry but sympathetic observer of the human condition, able to mix abstract imagery, fantasy and heart-breaking truth with effortless grace. The album generated serious anticipation for their next effort, *Change*, released late last year.

On first listen, the aptly titled LP sounds like a major departure, with less visceral impact than the suckerpunch its predecessor delivered. But after a few spins, *Change* emerges as the band’s strongest, most cohesive work. “Sentimental Man” starts things off strong, but it’s the seamless transition into “The Face of the Earth” that hips you to the Plan’s evolution. As acoustic guitar plucking gives way to lumbering dub bass and reggae-like rhythm guitar scratches, a yearning Morrison melody addresses the titular theme that resounds throughout the album: separation and resolution, breaking up and moving on. Understated synth floats through the stereo field, lending a ghostly presence to the lyrics.

Elsewhere on the record, “Pay for the Piano” is a furious, Fugazi-style workout, full of awkward angles that resolve in a chorus of straight-line adrenaline. “Secret Curse” rips like early Sonic Youth (but with guitars in tune), mixing meaty rock

riffs with whispered verses and a lung-bursting chorus of “Please, please, please I’m sorry!” “The Other Side” features a standard pop chord progression, but drummer Joe Easley lays an inhuman drum ’n’ bass groove underneath the affair that must be heard to be believed.

The album’s closer, “Ellen & Ben,” is pure pop bliss: A video game synth riff winds its way around Easley’s hip-hop groove while disco guitars dance and Morrison sings about a pair of lovers “who made each other feel like they could die, but couldn’t stay the slightest of friends.” For an album about growing apart and growing up, it’s the perfect finale.

**B**ut *Change* is also an alarm call. Although major labels traffic in watered-down Punk Lite™ and the music’s rebel yell has been reduced to a meek, radio-friendly “Oi,” you can’t blame The Man entirely. Even punk’s most “hardcore” institutions, led by iconoclastic newsprint rag *Maximum Rocknroll*, have helped foster the decline by proclaiming any music

without buzz-saw guitars or dexedrine-fueled screams “unpunk.”

The result of such scenester posturing was predictable: Divided we fall. Divisive politics, retro-kitsch and resistance to change have bled punk dry. Don’t let the Dismemberment Plan’s name fool you: This is a band about uniting body and mind, about making people think about punk rock as intensely as they feel its caged-animal energy.

Attend one of the Plan’s damn near religious live shows, and when the beer-bellied Milwaukee native next to you begins gyrating to “Spider in the Snow,” and the Costello-spectacled lad in the striped sweater next to him follows suit, you’ll understand what I mean by *unite*. You’ll understand why humans created punk rock in the first place. It’s the connection, the “silver thread imbedded deep within our spines” that binds us to one another. This is the Plan. This is how we change—for the better. ■

Evan Endicott is a music writer living in Los Angeles.

## The Docs’ Good News

By Pat Aufderheide

**F**rom its crunchy-granola origins, the Sundance film festival has become a major marketplace at the base of a spectacular ski slope. Party tickets are as important as movie tickets, and lift tickets are only for civilians. Cell-phoned dealmakers in snowboots scout budding talent and find the next crop of upscale cineplex morsels. This year, for the first time, there was an official sales office for the industry.

Success or sellout? Some say the festival, and other projects of the Sundance Institute such as its production labs, has pushed independent filmmakers toward more palatable, commercial models. Others say Sundance has built important bridges between the industry and independents. Films such as *Amores Perros*, *Central Station*, *Smoke Signals* and *Like Water for Chocolate* have formed platforms for these debates.

Now, Sundance is spotlighting the industry’s stepchild, documentary. Doc filmmakers are typically driven by passion for their subject matter and social issues,

and the glam-celeb quotient is negligible. This year’s Sundance commitment was shown in four areas: programming, distribution, training and funding.

The documentary lineup was rich in important social themes. Kristi Jacobson’s *American Standoff*, a suspenseful story of organizing in the Teamsters, was produced by Barbara Kopple (with whose *Harlan County, U.S.A.* and *American Dream* this makes a tragic trilogy). Dan Gold and Judith Helfand’s *Blue Vinyl* chronicles with wry humor Helfand’s investigation of the toxic life cycle of polyvinyl chloride, as she searches for an alternative to vinyl siding on her parents’ home. *Sister Helen*, by Rebecca Cammisa and Rob Fruchtmann, follows a feisty old woman, a reformed drinker and lay nun, as she runs a group house for recovering addicts; in the process, it shows the many ways that highly imperfect people can do enormous good.

*Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony*, by Lee Hirsch, powerfully

retells the anti-apartheid struggle through the songs that carried the spirit of the movement forward. Marco Williams and Whitney Dow co-directed *The Two Towns of Jasper*, about the cultures of racism in the Texas town where James Byrd Jr. was murdered. Liz Garbus and Rory Kennedy's *The Execution of Wanda Jean* follows a condemned woman through her last few months of life. Its case against the death penalty is all the more powerful because the condemned woman is clearly guilty. *Daughter from Danang*, which won the grand jury prize, takes us with an adopted Amerasian woman, whose reunion with her Vietnamese birth family brings unexpected new traumas.

"Sundance audiences are always great, but this year was special," says Arthur Dong, whose *Family Fundamentals* focuses on conservative Christian families in conflict with their gay relatives. "After one screening I was entirely surrounded by Mormons, and I was beginning to get worried. Then one of them said, 'We'd like to say thank you for your fair treatment.'"

**W**here will audiences find these films next? Most will show up in major-city theaters briefly, then go to TV. A few have major outreach programs to work with community organizations, including *Blue Vinyl* and *Two Towns of Jasper* (see [www.workingfilms.org](http://www.workingfilms.org)). Some, such as *Daughter from Danang*, will appear on public television; the Independent Television Service was a key investor in many Sundance docs. And many, including *Blue Vinyl*, will show on HBO, which has been beefing up its social-issues lineup.

Sundance itself may become a small part of the distribution solution as well. Festival head Robert Redford announced the launch of a doc channel to parallel its channel for independent features. Even so, the most optimistic scenario still leaves out the third of the nation that's not hooked up to pay TV; the doc channel so far has only the promise of satellite distribution and hopes for cable TV pickup.

The House of Docs, a Sundance initiative launched in 2000, is both refuge and



Scenes from the wry *Blue Vinyl*, a documentary about toxic siding.

resource for documentary filmmakers. With a conference room, a lounge and a coffee and wine bar, it makes a home for social-issues filmmakers. Discussions were wide-ranging. For instance, Ellen Schneider, a veteran of outreach for broadcast programs on social themes, hosted a panel on organizing through media that featured, among others, Julia Pimsleur, whose [mediarights.org](http://mediarights.org) matches up organizers for social causes with docs that can help them, and Robert West of Working Films. West had just returned from showing *The Two Towns of Jasper* at the Utah State House as part of an effort to revive interest in hate-crimes legislation. Other panels featured international distribution, women's perspectives and digital storytelling.

"House of Docs lets me understand how other filmmakers do their work,"

says Vanessa Roth, whose *Close to Home* concerns child abuse. "At the same time, programming the film at Sundance introduced it to much wider audiences, with the hope of even wider reach."

One of the most innovative projects showcased at House of Docs this year was Steps for the Future, a massive project that resulted in 37 TV programs on HIV/AIDS subjects, all produced by southern Africans (with help from the West as needed). On a trip to South Africa, filmmaker and Finnish TV executive Iikka Vehkalahti was horrified by the government's denial of the link between HIV and AIDS, and the lack of public access to anti-AIDS drugs. He gathered support for the international project from other European TV officials and from the Soros Documentary Fund of the Open Society Institute.

*Mother to Child* follows two pregnant women through treatment that increased the chance for their babies to be born healthy; *It's My Life* features the dynamic and courageous AIDS activist Zackie Achmat; and *Wa N'Wina* is a youth-made film where teens talk about sex. The programs (available from DayZero at [dayzero.co.za/steps/](http://dayzero.co.za/steps/)) have been shown in southern Africa and on European TV channels—but not, shamefully, on any U.S. channels, even on public TV.

**T**he care and nurturing of future documentarians is a problem everywhere, given its small financial rewards. But there were signs of hope, such as the announcement that Sundance will now run a \$4.5 million fund for documentary filmmaking. Sundance also will establish documentary labs to parallel its current labs for fiction filmmakers. And the Soros fund that contributed to the Steps for the Future program—as well as many other socially engaged films over the past few years—has gone with its manager Diane Weyermann to Sundance permanently.

"When you work for three years on a film, you wonder if anyone will ever see it. Sundance has been the best gift," says Rob Fruchtmann, whose *Sister Helen* won a directing prize. "It re-energizes us. It publicizes the film and gives it credibility. Now we have to get the film out to people." ■



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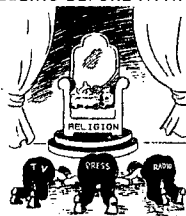


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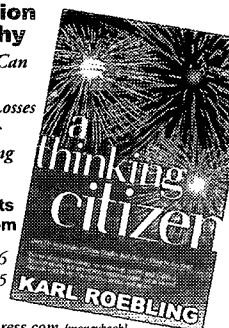
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By Nicole Hollander

Continued from back page

**As a proud, visible Jew in the literary world, you seem to have an ambiguous relationship with Zionism. For example, you said a few years ago, "Zionism is an unappealing and problematic heritage." What did that mean to you and what does your relationship with Israel look like today?**

In a way I have made a conscious decision about this play, especially since 9/11, that I don't want the play to be swallowed up in a lot of political controversy. I understand where Israel came from and, to the extent that anyone can make such a stupid statement, I understand the Holocaust. I mean, we all understand the Holocaust, and I believe the Jews maybe understand it in a way that other people don't. So I understand the founding of a state in a response to an almost successful attempt at genocide.

Having said that, I am going to go ahead and put my foot in my mouth and get in trouble because I am very upset about what is going on. I have huge problems with Zionism. As a Jew, I have always said the promised land seems to me to be the Constitution of the United States of America. We are a minority. I am a member of two minorities: Jews and homosexuals. I don't feel safe being part of a nation-state that is exclusively Jewish any more than I would with a nation-state that is exclusively gay.

I think that the protection of minorities against majoritarian tyranny—the kind of majoritarian tyranny that in its most monstrous form resulted in Hitler and the Holocaust—is pluralist democracy, in which the rights of the minority are quite specifically what the government protects against. And it has worked here. This has been a great country for Jewish people. And we have participated in a magnificent way in the ongoing project of creating an American democracy.

**Many people look to Israel so that we can have a Jewish nation as, if nothing else, a bulwark against anti-Semitism.**

My bulwark against anti-Semitism is hate-crime legislation in the United States. And the Bill of Rights. And the whole glorious tradition of Western civil libertarian jurisprudence. And legislative traditions that have led to the Constitution.

I mean, how many Jews are there in the whole world? We are a tiny, tiny group of people. Israel exists at the sufferance of the United States. So it is not a bulwark against anti-Semitism. The people in Israel are profoundly unsafe right now. They are in terrible trouble. The existence of the state of Israel, because of the terrible way that the Palestinian people have been treated, is now in great peril and the world is in peril as a consequence of it. And we have now the spectacle of Jewish people all over the world, who in the past century had

an absolutely magnificent tradition of rejecting barbarism and right-wing murderous politics, rallying behind Ariel Sharon who 10 years ago would never have been acceptable anywhere. The current conflagration is completely terrifying. I feel very frightened by what is coming.

**In what way?**

Hamas is terrible and blowing up people in buses is terrible, and I shouldn't have to say this in an interview. It's like, "Yes, of course."

But if you say anything about the Palestinian situation it means you want to see teen-agers blown up in a discotheque. It's disgusting. That's not true. I don't believe in that kind of stuff. I don't believe in blowing up people to make your point. I believe that comes out of desperation, and I believe what has been happening in the Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza is appalling.

There are many things wrong with Yasser Arafat and with the Palestinian Authority. There are huge problems there. But many of those problems were created by the

world's indifference to the plight of the Palestinians after so many decades.

What did it mean when Israel announced that Arafat was no longer in their eyes the head of the Palestinians? Well, who is? So what are they going to do now? Are they going to reoccupy? Is that what we are heading toward? And what will that lead the world into?

Rabin and Peres were doing a very dangerous and difficult and brave thing. So was Bill Clinton. And then Sharon comes in and is basically telling Hamas, "If you blow up pizza parlors and discotheques and buses, you will get what you want, which is no peace."

Hamas is not behind the peace process; they are behind driving the Arab world into a war with Israel. And Sharon basically says, "Keep blowing up Israelis, and I'll never have to get back to the peace table."

Bush and Powell said for seven months, before 9/11, "Do what you want. We don't nation-build. We're Republicans. We don't do that kind of thing. We're just going to sit back and, meanwhile, give the Taliban \$40 million to reward them for their great successes not producing opium poppies." Then the towers came down and it took them weeks to get Sharon to stop taking advantage of the disaster.

It is very painful because conservative American Jews are supporting the most reactionary elements in the Israeli political family and helping to derail the peace process in Israel. And it is very, very sad and very frightening. I certainly pray that the state of Israel will survive, but I do not believe it can survive if it maintains these policies.

I have said enough. I am not even sure I should have said

PHOTOS COURTESY NEW YORK THEATER WORKSHOP



**A scene from Kushner's new play *Homebody/Kabul*, which centers on the obsession of a British housewife for an idealized Afghanistan.**



this much because now there are going to be demonstrations outside the theater.

The other thing that is horrible is that we don't even talk about it. Occasionally someone from Israel publishes something in the *New York Times* that no American Jew would dare say. We are all so fucking quiet, because we are afraid of ... Cynthia Ozick. We are afraid of the intelligentsia, you know, the Podhoretzs and the right-wing Jews, not to mention the real *mashugenas*—who are literally policing this issue—so it literally does not get discussed. Which then creates more of an impression, which is a false one, that we are monolithic. I mean, every time that I have an interview with the Jewish press I imagine we are going to get into a fight about Israel, but there is never a fight. I keep running into these people. So why isn't there a peace movement among American Jews, like New York City's Jews for Racial and Economic Justice?

***While you are often deeply critical of America's policies, it is clear you are doing so because you want America to achieve its ideals. When you are confronted by our past and current injustices, where do you look to maintain your pride as an American?***

To me one of the stark divisions that 9/11 made clear was the extent that we really are in danger of becoming an empire, in the classic sense of the term. I mean Gore Vidal has been saying it—so has Pat Buchanan, God forbid. The citizens at the core of the empire have a great life, in many ways an outrageously enviable life, but it is hard to make comparisons between even the desperately poor in this country and the way much of the rest of the world lives.

I have great optimism in American domestic politics. I believe we have turned people into the citizens of a democracy. And I think that is why they rejected the Republican attempt to impeach Clinton. That is why they got through the Florida election crisis without becoming panicked. Because for all that we have that is naïve and uneducated, we have been shaped as citizens of a democracy.

Jefferson and Madison would be impressed. We have a savvy that should be the envy of the world and is a great source of my pride as an American. I think Americans are a sophisticatedly political people, even if they do not know how to articulate it. They just know it. They get it. They know how to be small "d" democrats.

But part of the way we have been able to do that is to have blinders on about our foreign policies. So we have become Rome. We have a great life. We have protected rights. The rest of the world are our slaves, and we just don't talk about them. And periodically they kick down the gates and do terrible things to us. What happened on 9/11 is the worst yet, but not the end.

That is not at all an answer to your question about my source of pride as an American. O.K. ... Brandeis. You know, as a gay man and a Jew, that is where it comes from. When I say Brandeis, I mean it. These "guys," these men and these women: Emma Lazarus, Emma Goldman ... I mean, the presence of marginalized minorities—like Jews, gays, and African-Americans—have shaped the center. The attempt to create a sort of majoritarian, slave-owning, white Christian culture in the 19th century, pursued with breathtaking violence and malice and determination, was met with absolutely

spectacular resistance and genius and spirit. And the attempt to crush the rights of minorities paradoxically has created—based on the genius of the original framers of the Constitution—very slowly and very painfully and at great cost, a body of laws, a tradition, precedence.

Just a few days ago, this British journalist told me, "Oh, it's so terrible here because, after all, you have military tribunals." Are you kidding? Go to Belfast and talk about military tribunals. You people don't have a Bill of Rights. You don't have *habeas corpus*. You never had it. We are having a fight now about this idiot trying to suspend it. But it's not going to work. It could never work. They are going to abandon it. And if they don't, they are going to be in court for the next 10 trillion years and, ultimately, if we get a real Supreme Court that isn't just Bush's butt-boys, it will be thrown out. It is totally unconstitutional.

***Do you really want me to say "butt-boys?"***

Oh, absolutely. Those people. Those aged whores. These five people on the Supreme Court are absolutely awful. They stole the election.

I feel that history is so exciting. It has really, literally inspired the world. We are not better than other people, and the world has inspired us in many cases. But all over the world people say, "We shall overcome." The civil rights movement and the '60s was an American revolution, in many ways. This country has a glorious tradition that it constantly betrays. ■

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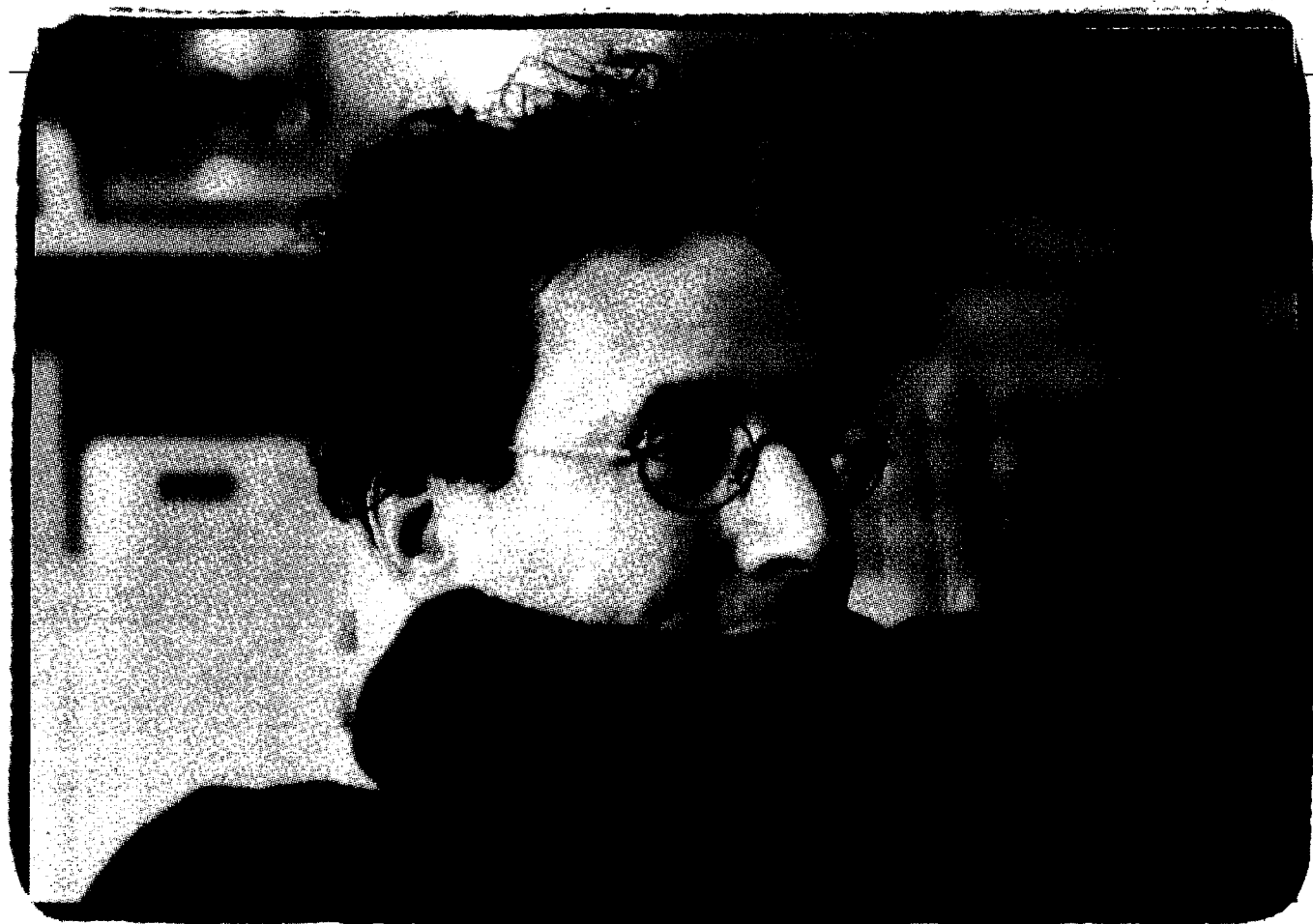


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# Tony Kushner, Native Son

By Barry Joseph

**T**ony Kushner, the Pulitzer-winning playwright of *Angels in America*, is a rare force on the American stage. He is as highly regarded for the brilliance of his work as for his ability to infuse his writing with a sophisticated political consciousness. His latest play, *Homebody/Kabul*, opened in New York City in December to rave reviews. The nearly four-hour production, written before the attacks of September 11, centers on the obsession of a British housewife for an idealized Afghanistan and explores the power dynamics that corrupt relations between their two worlds.

In *These Times* interviewed Kushner the night before the play's final rehearsal, during a week that saw tensions in the Middle East reach an all-time high. He discussed his new show, American pride, Israel and terrorism.

**For the renowned playwright, the bulwark against anti-Semitism isn't Israel but "the United States, the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, the whole glorious tradition of Western jurisprudence."**

*Homebody/Kabul is very much about people encountering themselves by encountering a sense of "other"—Christians and Muslims, East and West. And one of the things I noticed is that the characters are all straight Christians and Muslims, characters other to you, a gay, Jewish American.*

In a sense every character you create is an "other", even if you are creating a gay, Jewish New York character, because you are creating fiction. But one thing I would also say about playwrighting is that if you are doing your job well, you come to understand certain universalizing characteristics as well. "Otherness" is a profound thing. "Difference" is a profound thing. And "common humanity" is a profound thing. With all the research I have done on Afghans and Brits specifically for this show, and the research I did on Germans for *A Bright Room Called Day* and Mormons for *Angels in America*, I always recognize certain tropes, certain relationships. I probably write more from that and then put in a filigree of difference.

*Continued on page 29*